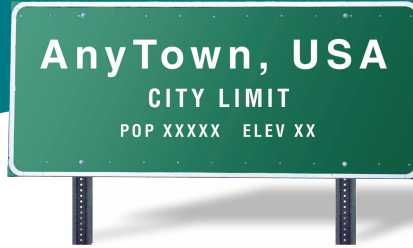


National
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Institute for
Youth, Education,
and Families



beyond city limits

CROSS-SYSTEM COLLABORATION
TO REENGAGE
DISCONNECTED YOUTH



*A project funded by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation*

The Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (YEF Institute) is a special entity within the National League of Cities (NLC).

NLC is the oldest and largest national organization representing municipal government throughout the United States. Its mission is strengthen and promote cities as centers of opportunity, leadership, and governance.

The YEF Institute helps municipal leaders take action on behalf of the children, youth, and families in their communities. NLC launched the YEF Institute in January 2000 in recognition of the unique and influential roles that mayors, city councilmembers, and other local leaders play in strengthening families and improving outcomes for children and youth.

Through the YEF Institute, municipal officials and other community leaders have direct access to a broad array of strategies and tools, including:

- Action kits that offer a menu of practical steps that officials can take to address key problems or challenges.
- Technical assistance projects in selected communities.
- Issue-based peer networks to support cross-city learning.
- The National Summit on Your City's Families and other workshops, training sessions, and cross-site meetings.
- Targeted research and periodic surveys of local officials.
- The YEF Institute's web site, audioconferences, and e-mail listservs.

To learn more about these tools and other aspects of the YEF Institute's work, go to www.nlc.org/iyef or leave a message on the YEF Institute's information line at (202) 626-3014.

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Introduction

Dear Municipal Leader:

Mayors, councilmembers, city managers, and other municipal leaders increasingly recognize that they have a vested interest in helping disconnected youth – teenagers and young adults who lack connections to school, work, and caring adults – get their lives onto a positive path. By reconnecting these young people to education, job training, and other vital services, cities can build a stronger base for future economic growth while also making their communities safer and their neighborhoods stronger and more stable.

The biggest challenge often lies in the fact that no one agency or public system can typically address the multiple obstacles facing disconnected youth. Collaboration between city, school, county, and state agencies is essential to ensure that young people are being connected to necessary opportunities and supports, rather than falling through the cracks.

The eight case studies in this report demonstrate that city leaders are well-positioned to launch these collaborative efforts. Mayors in particular can play an important role in bringing together key stakeholders and developing a citywide strategy that responds to the diverse needs of disconnected youth. The results achieved through these cross-system initiatives include broadened opportunities and better outcomes for youth as well as an improved quality of life in the communities in which they live.

We hope that you find this report to be a useful tool as you craft collaborative efforts to improve the lives of young people in your own city or town.



Donald J. Borut
Executive Director
National League of Cities



Clifford M. Johnson, Executive Director
Institute for Youth, Education, and Families
National League of Cities

Executive Summary

For young people who have dropped out of school, are out of work, or lack connections to family or other caring adults, there are often no easy answers. Their hopes for a better life are frequently no different than those harbored by their more advantaged peers, but their path to adulthood is rendered more difficult by tangled combinations of skill deficits, impoverished neighborhoods, racial discrimination, family disintegration, and personal and behavioral challenges. As a result, strategies to help disconnected youth make successful transitions to adulthood typically are effective only when designed to address multiple needs – for continuing education, employment, mentoring, and a range of personal supports.

In city after city that has sought to assist vulnerable youth in transition, prominent officials or agencies have come to a key realization: “*We can’t do this alone.*” The recognition of the interrelated problems facing many older teens and young adults – and the need for more comprehensive responses to address those problems – opens the door for public systems or agencies to work together in new and different ways.

This report describes how eight different cities have launched cross-system initiatives and what they have accomplished through these new collaborations. Their efforts vary greatly and involve a broad array of partners. Many initiatives began without clear long-term goals or fully developed blueprints for action. These early attempts to build

relationships and trust, however, were crucial in setting the stage for future progress. The experience of all eight cities suggests that simply opening a dialogue about the gaps between public systems serving young people can yield major dividends, and that the benefits of collaboration become evident even when as few as two key agencies start working together.

The number and variety of public systems and agencies working together in three cities – Boston, Albany (N.Y.), and San Diego – are particularly impressive. Highlights from the in-depth case studies presented in this report include:

- Boston has developed a strong collaboration among workforce development, criminal justice, and education systems. One of the city’s most well-developed collaborative initiatives is Youth Opportunity Boston, now entering its tenth year. It began as a partnership between the city’s workforce development agency and police department in reaction to the dearth of services for court-involved teenagers and young adults (ages 16-24). Youth Opportunity Boston has since expanded to include close working arrangements with the youth services department, Boston Public Schools, and numerous other agencies.
- Albany similarly has brought together its workforce, education, and criminal justice systems, with growing linkages to social services as well. Through the city’s Department of Youth and Workforce

Services (DYWS), Albany has created a comprehensive and personalized service navigation system that offers young people a universal point of access to youth employment and development programs as well as other needed supports. Other manifestations of Albany's cross-system collaboration include multi-system gang prevention and truancy reduction efforts.

- San Diego's Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council serves as a meeting and policy-making ground for representatives of systems including criminal/juvenile justice (courts, probation, police), education, business, and public and nonprofit human service providers. Success in forging strong personal relationships among key agency leaders has enabled the Council to deepen cross-system discussions and joint problem-solving. Reflecting on the early days of collaborative efforts among criminal justice agencies, former-Police Chief, now-Mayor Jerry Sanders commented: "We got to know each other really well. After a while we could just pick up the phone and call." The head of the intermediary agency that provides staff support for the collaboration notes that now "they know each other. They actually like seeing each other at meetings. Sometimes they call telling me who they would like to sit next to."

Five other cities profiled in this report have made sustained progress in building strong cross-system efforts between two or more key systems or agencies:

- In Baltimore, the Mayor's Office of Employment Development has forged a partnership with Baltimore City Public Schools to promote dropout prevention and recovery through various career and college-focused educational options.
- Youth Opportunities United in Corpus Christi, Texas, drew upon city

government, regional entities and the local United Way in its search for shorter-term projects that could serve as focal points for collaboration.

- In Philadelphia, the courts and probation, workforce development, and social service systems have combined efforts to launch a new juvenile re-integration initiative.
- San Francisco's joint city-county Human Services Agency and a new, mayor-appointed Transitional Youth Task Force play leading roles in cross-system efforts to improve outcomes for youth transitioning from foster care.
- In San José, the Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force provides an essential meeting ground for interagency collaboration and the Bringing Everyone's Strengths Together (BEST) collaborative draws in social service organizations from across the city.

In the context of strong mayoral leadership, cross-system collaboration becomes a key strategy for responding to the needs of disconnected youth – often with greater success than many thought possible. Albany Mayor Gerald Jennings describes the outcomes achieved through effective cross-system efforts in this way: "Each agency knows what the others are doing – and they do a better job than they would have done on their own." A pointedly humorous definition calls the practice of collaboration "putting the money on the table, and taking your hands off." Indeed, in discussing who would serve as fiscal agent for a recent Boston grant to create a social work position to help transition young people from detained status (i.e., pretrial, out on bail, or on probation) back into schools, one long-time collaborator noted: "We've all worked together for so long that it didn't matter who got the money."



Collaboration across multiple agencies and systems

offers local leaders a more effective and coordinated method of improving outcomes for disconnected youth and a more efficient way of doing business.

The Benefits of Cross-System Collaboration

Drawing upon the work of scholar Chris Huxham, the YEF Institute's working definition of cross-system collaboration for disconnected youth is when two or more public agencies commit and follow through on exchanging information, altering activities, sharing resources, and enhancing each other's capacity for common or overlapping groups of young adults.

Collaboration across multiple agencies and systems offers local leaders a more effective and coordinated method of improving outcomes for disconnected youth and a more efficient way of doing business. As collaborative partners overcome silos within and between municipal, county, and state levels of government, as well as barriers with school districts and community groups, new opportunities emerge and the benefits of working together become increasingly visible.

Cross-system initiatives improve the experiences of young people dealing with disconnection. In San Diego, extensive collaboration and innovative approaches led to a tripling of the family reunification rate for children in foster care (from 20 percent to 60 percent), while the number of children entering the system each year dropped by one-third. Probation officers are now welcomed into Albany's public schools and have been empowered to refer young people to the employment and training services the city can offer. In Boston, education liaisons within the state Department of Youth

Services (DYS) now refer juvenile offenders who will be released from DYS facilities within three months to workforce social workers who help the young people develop education plans.

Cross-system collaboration changes the way individual systems operate and how existing agencies do their work. Agencies and systems become more accessible under the positive influence of collaboration and demonstrate a greater readiness to tackle policy, procedural, and attitudinal barriers. This shift within the Boston Police Department is reflected in the broadly held view that "we will not take on strategies by ourselves." In San Diego, the collaborative spirit has also infused local decisions about the allocation of scarce resources. Upon taking office, the city's chief probation officer learned from his staff that his agency would respond to a budget shortfall by taking its share of spending cuts along with local service providers. San Diego's assistant police chief brings this same spirit to budget negotiations, noting that "if they close the parks, we will be arresting 50 more kids who have nothing to do."

Cross-system partnerships fill gaps and result in more comprehensive and effective interventions. For example, when circumstances called for a new approach to youth employment, training, and social services in Albany, the Commissioner of Youth and Workforce Services convened a group that eventually became key partners in the city's Service Navigation System. In San José,

a growing network of alternative schools and afterschool programs have created new education options for dropouts and struggling students, including former gang members who for the first time have opportunities tailored to their needs through a partnership between a multi-service agency and gang intervention experts at California Youth Outreach.

Cross-system collaborations result in more effective uses of scarce public resources. Most city leaders recognize that effective interventions on behalf of disconnected youth require significant public investments. At the same time, cross-system efforts can reduce duplication of services and yield improved outcomes for young people that generate cost savings over time. One San Diego collaboration among city, county, and community agencies, designed to reduce the emphasis on out-of-home foster care placement, saved the county \$1.6 million in just 50 cases – a 58 percent reduction in projected expenditures. The leadership of the local collaborative pointed frequently to this figure, noting that the resulting savings could be used to meet other needs. Albany Mayor Jennings acknowledges that his quest for opportunities to bring about better coordination of services is driven in part by the need to get through tight budget times and reduce the pressure to raise local taxes.

Cross-system initiatives lead to better structures and practices for sharing valuable information. Collaboration helps meet the strongly felt need of city agencies and their partners to cut through barriers to information sharing. Information sharing, in turn, helps ensure that multiple systems' efforts on behalf of individuals, families, and neighborhoods have a stronger cumulative impact. In San José, city agencies, police, and school districts identified a specific provision in state law that provided a framework for sharing information in cases in which gang or other illegal activity was suspected, which resulted in increased school and neighborhood safety.

Motivating Themes: Why Municipal Leaders Care About Disconnected Youth

These benefits of cross-system collaboration offer compelling reasons for mayors and other city leaders to insist that public systems or agencies serving disconnected youth work more effectively together. In a more fundamental way, however, municipal officials often choose to act on behalf of disconnected youth because they recognize it is in the best interest of the city – and the larger community – to do so. Close examination of the case study sites reveals at least three additional explanations for why city leaders focus on the needs of young people who have dropped out of school, are out of work, or lack connections to family or other caring adults.

Perceived or actual threats to public safety:

The concerted, multi-system efforts represented in the “Boston Miracle” led by Mayor Thomas Menino in the mid-1990s – which completely eliminated youth homicides for a two-year period – came about in part as a response to a spike in fatal shootings by teenagers and young adults. (At the same time, the Police Department was undergoing a helpful shift in goal orientation from “law enforcement” to “making the community safer,” a shift that has remained in place to this day.) Albany Mayor Jennings' first-term experiment with Kid Improvement Districts, as well as the city's current anti-truancy initiative, sprang from concerns about rising crime and victimization rates among young people.

Moral responsibility and fairness: Many mayors articulate and act out of a set of fundamental values, emphasizing our collective responsibility to protect and care for children and youth. “These are [all] our kids,” says Mayor Menino. “You can't give up on these kids.” Mayor Jennings sounds a similar theme: “I don't want to write off any kids.” San Diego Assistant Police Chief William Maheu, a protégé of Mayor Jerry Sanders,

adds that his city “wants to give these [disadvantaged] kids what I got as a kid, and what I’m trying to give my kids.” An implied reference throughout these comments is that youth with more advantages often receive second chances, and that such opportunities to recover from early missteps should be available to all. Mayor Menino comments, “The fact that a lot of these kids have made a mistake shouldn’t mean they’re marked for the rest of their lives.”

The importance of strong families and a future workforce/citizenry:

Some city leaders pay attention to young people transitioning into adulthood – especially those facing difficult transitions – because they represent the community’s next generation of families, workers, and voters. Boston’s collaborations are infused with a collective spirit, supported and advanced by the mayor, of searching for the present-day and future contributions each young person can make to the city. As Mayor Menino puts it, “These ‘at-risk’ kids are very smart; they just don’t know how to channel their resources.” Collaborating agencies in San Diego reached early agreement on several central policy aims that tie back to families, including a focus on reunifying families, beefing up protective factors (rather than only trying to reduce risk factors), lessening the number of young people in lockups and experiencing lengthy stays in foster care, and using neighborhood and holistic strategies. “We wanted to get in front of the demographic bulge,” notes Mayor Sanders, by way of explaining one rationale for the city’s involvement in these efforts.

Key Ingredients for Success: What Makes Cross-System Collaboration Work

The vital importance of mayoral leadership

The case studies in this document, and years of experience in other cities across the nation, underscore that success in cross-

system collaboration for disconnected youth is the direct result of strong, clear leadership. Leadership gets people and agencies started, brings them together around common goals, and keeps everyone’s “eyes on the prize” of reaching more disconnected youth with greater assurance of long-term civic and workforce engagement. If we think of a typical complex collaborative effort as a machine with many interconnected moving parts, leadership holds all of the parts together and enables them to function effectively.

Mayors are most often in the best position to make cross-system collaboration happen in their communities, and sometimes the only people who can do so. Other types of efforts may call for strong leadership from the business or social service sectors, and help from these sectors is needed for disconnected youth as well. However, to reach across the often sharp lines that divide the education, child welfare, juvenile justice, mental health, and workforce development systems administered by city, county, and state governments, and to begin to connect those systems in appropriate ways, the mayor’s unique mix of budget and programmatic authority, elected legitimacy, and electoral accountability is essential.

Strong and effective mayoral leadership involves embracing a number of specific roles that can be dubbed “five Cs and a P”: **c**onceptualizing, **c**onvening, **c**ross-walking, **c**ommissioning, **c**o-financing, and **p**romoting. At different points in the process of forming and sustaining a collaborative, a mayor may give greater or lesser emphasis to particular roles, but all of them are likely to come into play throughout the course of a cross-system initiative.

Conceptualizing – and proclaiming – a vision:

A key early and ongoing role for the mayor is to *conceptualize and proclaim a vision*. The vision provides a common target for which to aim, and also inspires new levels

of action and cooperation. Mayor Jennings explains his vision this way: “I ran for mayor because I wanted to make a positive change in the lives of the kids...we need better alternative settings for those [older kids] who aren’t making it.” Mayor Menino also has a clear idea of what it will take to help disconnected youth and protect their safety: “The way to stop violence in our city is to have neighborhood groups work with the kids.” Former San José Mayor Ron Gonzales regularly reminded his city’s residents and those elsewhere of his goal that “all youth and their families will feel safe and productive in San José.” San Diego’s vision, arrived at through a lengthy consultative process, is to be CLEAR: “for all of San Diego’s youth to develop into caring, literate, educated and responsible community members.”

Convening: A rarely overused role of the mayor is to *convene groups to take action*. This opportunity arises from the mayor’s unique ability to bring together those who do not often or easily work together. A mayor’s invitation to meet and coordinate efforts often cuts through agency and personal differences or fiefdoms (it’s hard to say “no”), and creates an environment in which a well-crafted vision can be widely shared. In launching collaborative efforts in the early 1990s as a response to the pleas of community members living in violent neighborhoods, former San José Mayor Susan Hammer first brought together the Mayor’s Gang Prevention Task Force and created the

San José BEST joint funding program, which operates under the task force’s overall direction. Her successor convened all of San José’s 19 school district superintendents in a new collaborative with city agencies focused on public and school safety.

Cross-walking: Closely related to the mayor’s convening power and role is the often unique ability to *get in front of a wide range of needed partners and persuade them to lend a hand in essential tasks*. This role is particularly important when considering areas such as foster care and juvenile justice, where the longstanding focal points have been county and state governments. The case studies presented here show mayors playing the cross-walking role with county and state government agencies and leaders, school districts and boards, foundations, and businesses. Staff members may chart the connections and lay the groundwork for effective conversations across governmental and sector lines, but mayors themselves “make the sale” and maintain the connections. This role also leaves mayors well-situated to speak directly to members of Congress, governors, state legislators, and their close allies when federal or state policies become impediments to further progress.

Commissioning – research, lead agencies, or intermediaries: The mayor’s authority includes *directing that things get done or be created, or that a particular entity take the lead*. A common early step is to charge one or more city departments with the task of



San Diego’s vision ... is to be CLEAR:

“for all of San Diego’s youth to develop into
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gathering statistics or conducting a program review so as to better understand the trends involving vulnerable groups such as young dropouts, pregnant and parenting teens, emancipating foster youth, and youth and young adults returning to the community from the justice system. The mayor may also commission one city department to serve in a key staffing role to a new collaboration.

Co-financing: Another key role of mayors is one of *directing or identifying financial support for initiatives*. As Mayor Menino noted, “I can advocate for youth, I can put resources toward them.” In some instances, a mayor can direct city funding to an initiative in the pilot stage. At the other end of the continuum, mayors in several cities have helped identify local funding to continue initiatives, such as Youth Opportunity programs, that began with federal pilot funds. On an ongoing basis, the mayor’s influence or control of funding in areas such as workforce and community development, housing, health, and other fields can bolster resources available to disconnected youth initiatives and collaborations. Successive San José mayors ensured that the city annually contributes up to \$3 million as “first-dollar” matching funds for local agencies under the BEST initiative. Recently, with the city budget under pressure, the mayor won kudos from school districts for not cutting the police department’s school liaison unit, a key facet of joint efforts among the city and districts.

Promoting: The mayor can also helpfully serve as the *lead promoter of a collaboration strategy and its outcome goals*. The leadership job does not end when a vision has been proclaimed, a collaboration convened, and even co-financing found. Mayors play a critical role in using their platform and visibility to sustain momentum. For instance, by making public appearances at key locations and at a series of events, San José’s mayors have served as the key public “face” of efforts

to ensure a safer city through collaboration. Philadelphia Mayor John Street created a powerful context for attention to youth issues by declaring the first – and every subsequent – year of his administration, the “Year of the Child.” Similarly, Mayor Jennings describes one of his goals as wanting to be known as the “children and youth mayor.”

The need for an effective coordinating body

Cities that foster and build cross-system collaborations succeed in part by identifying a municipal agency or nonprofit organization with the capacity to support and sustain major initiatives. These coordinating entities ensure that the plans set in motion by the mayor and other key leaders are carried out. They convene stakeholders on a regular basis, develop and maintain the collaboration’s institutional knowledge and history, and also keep the focus on systems change and sustainability.

These coordinating roles and responsibilities can be assumed by a city department. For example, the Boston Police Department has served as principal staff and continuing convener of a collaborative that has expanded to involve other city, county, state, and private agencies. From the department’s perspective, adopting these roles made sense as an outgrowth of its commitment to improve quality of life through community policing and an integrated strategy that blends prevention, intervention, and enforcement. Its leadership across the tenure of four police commissioners has built a climate of trust, mutual recognition of each partner’s contributions, and sharing of successes. The department today frequently generates the grant proposals that seek support for broad collaborations, and it even received support from the local community foundation through a rare grant to a public agency.

In Albany, the Department of Youth and Workforce Services (DYWS) has served as a laboratory and source of support for

ongoing experiments in collaboration and coordination even as it operates training, gang prevention, and juvenile aftercare programs for disconnected youth with a host of partners, including the police, courts, probation, and school district. DYWS also staffs the Safe Communities Advisory Board, a public safety planning and advisory body that functions as the community's federally-mandated juvenile justice accountability board. All members of the Board – which includes representatives of probation, family court, the mental health agency, the school district, community-based organizations (CBOs), the housing authority, and adult education – sign memoranda of understanding with the city to set the stage for frequent joint efforts.

Mayors in San José and Corpus Christi have designated their city parks and recreation departments to staff local collaborations, recognizing that these agencies had the deepest experience working with children and youth. The San José Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services Department provides staff support for the Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force, oversees a triennial strategic planning process for the Task Force, and contracts with the evaluator of programs that receive BEST funding. In Corpus Christi, Parks and Recreation Department staff have convened the all-volunteer Youth Opportunities United coalition and led the department into a role as host of numerous special youth initiatives and programs. Specialized departments focused on children, youth, and families play similar roles in staffing collaborations in San Francisco and other major cities.

In contrast, San Diego and Philadelphia represent locales that made conscious decisions to establish a nonprofit intermediary rather than creating or retaining that role inside government. An intermediary outside of city government can help in several ways: it can provide a structure for collaboration, serve as the storehouse for institutional

memory of lessons learned through collaboration, and at times launch or support specific programs and initiatives.

San Diego established The Children's Initiative (TCI) as a nonprofit intermediary organization with a mission to help children, youth, and families "reach their full potential by working for integrated service delivery systems that promote the values of collaboration and prevention, and for measurable outcomes in the fields of health, education, safety, and economic security." TCI serves as principal coordinator for sustaining implementation of the U.S. Department of Justice Comprehensive Strategy through staffing the local Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council. TCI also supports county-led efforts for foster care reform, brokers millions of dollars in afterschool funds to multiple communities and school districts, and hosts the countywide mentoring coalition.

Whereas juvenile crime prevention provided the impetus for TCI, the Philadelphia Youth Network (PYN) has its roots in the youth job training system. PYN took shape in 1999 as an independent nonprofit focused on workforce development for young people between the ages of 14 and 24. PYN helped redesign the system and now administers publicly-funded youth employment and training programs throughout the city, including three large-scale "E3 Power Centers" in Empowerment Zones, and plays a cooperating role in the one-stop Achieving Independence Center for transitioning foster youth. PYN's staff support for the Youth Council of the local Workforce Investment Board has permitted it to broaden the focus of the Youth Council substantially, and paved the way for the E3 Power Centers to become a venue for reintegration of young people returning from secure placement.

Philadelphia is also home to a citywide, nonprofit children's intermediary organization – Philadelphia Safe and Sound (PSS). Its annual efforts to develop a Children's Budget

for the city, as well as a Report Card on the Well-Being of Children and Youth, have provided moment-in-time and trend data as well as an infrastructure for local accountability efforts.

Accountability structures and the use of data to ensure results

In order for mayors and other community leaders to know “what’s working, and what’s not,” they need regular access to good data. Cities that seek to promote collaboration across public systems or agencies typically put a structure in place to gather and analyze data, and then utilize findings to help shape future policy and practice. In this way, they gather evidence of progress or impact and can assess whether identified gaps in services for disconnected youth are being filled. The resulting data are also valuable as a tool for explaining trends and issues accurately, thus increasing the understanding of leaders and citizens alike over time.

So what have proven to be good means for cross-system collaborations to gather and analyze data? Some cities have relied primarily on management information systems housed within city agencies to track trends in service levels and changes in young people’s needs. For example, youth program statistics compiled by Albany’s DYWS feature prominently in the mayor’s annual state of the city address. Baltimore took an important step by gathering program data through its Youth Opportunity collaboration and then issuing a high-profile report that presented results for participants and those for a comparison group in areas such as employment and earnings, education, youth pregnancy, crime, and work readiness.

Other cities have turned to institutional partners outside municipal government to tap greater expertise in research and evaluation. In San Diego, the Criminal Justice Research Division of the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) regional planning

agency has evaluated most of the juvenile justice and youth violence reduction initiatives launched within the county. Similarly, the Social Science Research Center of Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi has spearheaded data collection and analysis for that city’s Youth Opportunities United initiative. San José has also contracted out for additional data help, using reports created by a small private research firm to hold BEST-funded agencies accountable for results.

The pursuit of useful data in several cities has led to new ways of *sharing* data between and among systems and agencies. San Diego’s one-page Risk and Resiliency Tool, developed and approved for use by numerous agencies, generates up-to-date information on the risk and protective factors of individual teenagers and young adults that is funneled into a database accessible by all those agencies. This strategy avoids duplication of services and provides police officers, social workers, and others working with young people a better sense of their family, school, and neighborhood circumstances. Philadelphia is developing a “data warehouse” to bring about long-desired coordination between schools and human services. Finally, Boston has used geographic information systems as well as multiple agencies’ case records to map neighborhood “hot spots” and family dysfunction with greater sophistication, again in a way that undergirds cross-system collaboration.

Getting Started: Opportunities and Challenges

So how can city leaders begin – and sustain – cross-system efforts on behalf of disconnected youth? While the answers are inevitably and uniquely local, the case studies suggest a few common starting points for collaboration:

- The mayor convenes major stakeholders and designates a city agency or nonprofit intermediary to facilitate and support ongoing coordination. Building trust

among the agencies, systems, and individuals involved is a key challenge during this early stage of collaborative work.

- City leaders draw collaborative partners from some or all of the major systems affecting youth, including education, child welfare, and juvenile justice. The city may choose to focus initially on agencies over which it has the most direct control or leverage – workforce and community development, housing and homelessness, and law enforcement – and then broaden the collaboration over time.
- Municipal officials and their community partners gather data and conduct an assessment of strengths, resources, and needs, asking questions such as: What services are available for youth, and what structures and systems are supposed to be in place? What is known about the quality and lasting impact of those services? What critical gaps – in the kinds of services provided and their availability across neighborhoods – contribute to bad outcomes for disconnected youth? Are systems coordinating their efforts (or collaborating), and if so, how well?
- Collaborating agencies define common goals (and establish a structure for refreshing those goals as time goes on), agreeing on targets or measures of success, analyzing actual results, and orienting new partners or new personnel as turnover occurs.

A fuller and more detailed menu of potential action steps can be found in *Reengaging Disconnected Youth*, an action kit for municipal leaders published by NLC’s Institute for Youth, Education, and Families. Ongoing technical assistance proj-

ects sponsored by the Institute provide an additional source of guidance and advice for city officials as they move forward in this important area.

Any city will face challenges and limits in pulling together and sustaining cross-system collaboration. A historically sharp jurisdictional divide between city and county governments or conflicts between individual agency and system leaders may stall early progress, particularly if a key agency or system refuses to cooperate. Other cities may “hit the wall” during a leadership transition or a period of declining revenues. As with any project or initiative, city officials will find it essential to cultivate and train new leaders while searching constantly for new resources that can be used to continue or expand the effort.

Despite these potential pitfalls, however, the benefits of reengaging disconnected youth – and in the process improving the quality of life for all residents – clearly justify the time, effort, and resources that cross-system initiatives require. When the needs of young people who have dropped out of school, are out of work, or lack connections to family or other caring adults are not addressed, the image of any community as a great place to live, work, and raise a family is jeopardized. Against the backdrop of a history of missed opportunities for disconnected youth, an essential truth remains: No one public system or agency can meet these needs alone.

Municipal leaders are uniquely able to chart a different and more productive course for their cities, and the key to their success lies in their ability to bring multiple systems together in collaborative efforts on behalf of disconnected youth.

Case Studies



CASE STUDIES

Albany, New York

(pop. 93,523)

The Mayor and a Key City Agency Serve as Cross-System Connectors

Albany, the capital city of New York State, has actively pursued cross-system collaboration for older youth, motivated by a desire to prepare young people for the region's economic development plans and improve public safety. The city's mayor has promoted an agenda centered on children, youth, and families and has restructured city government in order to see that agenda fulfilled. In addition, specific concerns such as high truancy and dropout rates, a struggling alternative high school, and gangs have prompted previously distinct systems to work together.

Albany is an example of a medium-sized city in which a city government agency serves as the fulcrum for cross-system work and has put in place a "service navigation system" for youth. It is also a place that has utilized existing structures, such as the local juvenile

justice advisory board, to support collaboration under a broad conception of the board's mandate. Furthermore, situated within a county whose government serves a larger population outside the city than in, and which houses all child welfare functions, Albany provides an example of a city bridging a longstanding gap between city and county government.

How Cross-System Collaboration Works in Albany

● Leadership

Mayor Gerald D. Jennings, a former high school teacher, vice principal, and Common Council member, is serving his fourth term and has held the office since 1993. In addition to a clear vision and personal motivation – "I ran for mayor because I wanted to make a positive

change in the lives of the kids,” says Jennings – the mayor’s animated language and affect when speaking about young people form parts of a leadership package. “We...are leaving too many kids behind,” Jennings says in talking about the city’s dropout rate.

Early in his second term, Mayor Jennings launched concerted efforts toward becoming a “children and youth mayor.” This led to ongoing experimentation with agency responsibilities and leadership roles; collaboration, particularly between the school district and the city; and via specific programs as well. After years of experimentation, the local school superintendent notes, “the intentions of [city and school district] leadership are in the same place, especially for students at risk of dropping out. We recognize the value of partnership and mutual support for programs...working together is second nature.”

● **Lead Agency/Intermediary**

The city’s Department of Youth and Workforce Services (DYWS) is at the crux of multiple cross-system efforts. The department’s mission statement reflects this desire: “To work cooperatively with the local community to coordinate, plan, and develop services to enrich and further develop the lives of young people.” Physically, the department’s offices are located next to the workforce development one-stop center and the offices of the local Workforce Investment Board.

Former DYWS Commissioner Sheri Townsend employed the trust the mayor placed in her to promote collaboration among the city and the public schools, courts, relevant state agencies, the local branch of the state university, and community-based organizations (CBOs). Emphasizing openness and drawing upon

her background as a professional mediator, the commissioner set up one-on-one meetings with the leadership of numerous relevant public agencies and nonprofits early in her time in the post. The subject of these discussions was finding new ways to work together. This tangible commitment to outreach beyond the walls of her agency has paid continuing dividends in trust and readiness to collaborate.

The last six years of departmental evolution in name and function tells part of the story of increasing cross-system work. A youth-focused Department of Youth and Recreation Services first took shape during a city government reorganization in 1998 to oversee activities that included teen centers and recreation and to host a Youth Court. Subsequently, the city restored the Department of Recreation as a separate agency and renamed the youth agency as the Department of Youth and Family Services. In summer 2004, the name changed again to Department of Youth and Workforce Services (DYWS) to reflect the movement of all employment and training functions under one roof.

Today, using mostly state-administered funding passed through or granted to the city, and together with numerous agency and CBO partners, DYWS operates training, gang prevention, and aftercare programs for several hundred disconnected youth per year. In addition, the city payroll for the mayor’s 1,200-participant Summer Youth Employment Program passes through the department. Notably, the department exercises fiscal restraint in taking a leadership role for older youth in the city by holding onto only a small share of Workforce Investment Act (WIA) youth funds and distributing the rest to other partners.

DYWS has housed or spun off several cross-system efforts reaching Albany’s disconnected youth. Juvenile reentry and



“I ran for mayor because I wanted to make a positive
change in the lives of the kids.”

— Mayor Gerald D. Jennings, City of Albany

aftercare has been one area of activity, responding to a longtime concern about high recidivism rates. DYWS served for several years as lead agency for New Beginnings/Project Reconnect, which also involved Samaritan Shelters (a non-secure detention facility), Albany County Probation and Family Court, as well as the city school district. The department handed over day-to-day management of this initiative to Catholic Charities in 2004.

With the support of other city, county, and state agencies and community partners, the department directly runs three employment-oriented programs for disconnected youth. The route of access to all of these programs is through the Service Navigator (see below). In particular, Albany YouthBuild runs on the basis of strong cross-system foundations. Participants in this program rehabilitate houses identified by the Albany Community Land Trust and obtain educational credentials through the school district’s adult education division and Hudson Valley Community College. Participants in the city’s “Green Team” gain work experience in other government departments and nonprofit agencies. All participants in department-sponsored training receive case management support from MSW students at the State University of New York at Albany.

On another front, a DYWS staff person funded under a federal Title V grant leads

a multi-partner, three-county Capital Region Gang Prevention Program. Others involved in this program include the school district, correctional facilities (for shock tours), the Police Department, and CBOs such as the Boys and Girls Club and YMCA. Working with the Albany Housing Authority, gang prevention efforts have even expanded to include a stipended work program for 14- and 15-year old public housing residents. The organizing idea behind gang prevention efforts in the city is “community mobilization,” which has drawn the attention of numerous other cities in New York and surrounding states. Indeed, the state Division of Criminal Justice Services has cited the program as one that would not be viable without multi-agency collaboration.

● Unique and Noteworthy Aspects

A key starting point for cross-system work in Albany has been the way the local juvenile justice accountability board has taken and applied a broad view of its purpose. The Mayor’s Safe Communities Advisory Board has served simultaneously as this board, which a city must have in order to draw down federal Juvenile Accountability Block Grant (JABG) funds, and as the City Youth Bureau’s Board of Directors for the past several years. The Board fulfills ongoing convening and planning functions for the community, and is staffed by the DYWS commissioner. All members of the Board sign memoranda

of understanding with the city. Membership of the Board draws upon a significant range of agencies, and includes a city councilor; county officials, including the Probation Department commissioner, sheriff, Family Court judge, and the director of Children's Mental Health Services; school district leaders, including the superintendent, a high school principal, and Adult Learning Center principal; as well as representatives of the housing authority, service providers, and faith- and community-based organizations.

The County Probation commissioner describes how the cross-system communications vehicle represented by the Safe Communities Board has helped staff members of his agency better understand the city's resources. "Probation officers are now more educated on what the city can offer. For example, the [WIA] one-stop helps with employment for those on probation. Also, we know that some probationers are involved in gang activity, so we meet monthly with the Albany Police Department. We have better communication now that POs are in the school. This helps the courts because we know better where the violators may be, and can develop stronger relationships with parents."

The Albany High School principal adds another specific example of how the Board helps the city collaborate with the single citywide 10,000-student school district. Recently, the city began helping the school district meet an immediate need for young dropouts or alternative school students to obtain a Certificate of Employment so that they could gain work experience. The district superintendent goes on to describe the Board as a "place where we collaborate not just on dropouts, but on the issues of the school district that the city can support," citing cross-system connections for gang awareness and related problem resolution, placement of school resource officers from the police department, an extended school day program, and tutoring, through which DYWS supplies the district with additional part-time tutors (AmeriCorps volunteers) at low cost.

In 2004, the city and cross-system partners launched a Truancy Abatement Program, which represents one of the most tangible collaborations for disconnected youth created under the aegis of the Board. The Board's involvement with truancy began when the mayor and business community flagged the issue. The first step was brainstorming possible responses. Soon, county officials



"The intentions of [city and school district] leadership are in the same place, especially for students at risk of dropping out. We recognize the value of partnership and mutual support for programs... working together is second nature."

— Dr. Eva C. Joseph, Superintendent, City School District of Albany

reported that in 2003, Albany City School District students accounted for 90 percent of PINS (Persons In Need of Supervision) truancy referrals. Members of the Board worked together to develop policy, and drew up a plan that requires collaboration between the schools, the city police, county probation and child welfare departments, and others to reach goals of preventing truancy, PINS intakes, and juvenile crime as well as increasing parental responsibility.

County and city officials met every two weeks to hammer out implementation details of the Truancy Abatement Program. The county children's services commissioner commends former Commissioner Townsend for her openness to input from the county, which had objections to aspects of the "taking truant into custody" model originally under discussion. For example, the county wished to bring to bear its experience in dealing with medical and mental health issues that factor into truancy. The biweekly meetings provided a chance to make the city aware of county services that are available.

The Board went on to advise the city regarding the drafting of a truancy ordinance and to monitor implementation, which includes a citywide drop-off center located in the city youth services building, police morning pick-up and drop-off of truant youth ages 7-16, intake and screening by a youth service worker, and protocols for making contact with a parent or guardian and the relevant school. The truancy center also provides tutoring and life skills training, as well as a system for family intake which includes case planning and community service referrals. Representatives of the city police and county probation departments also make joint evening home visits to reinforce the stay-in-school message.

How Collaboration Makes a Difference for Albany's Most Vulnerable Youth

From the perspective of 300 or more disconnected young people reached each year, Albany is also notable for implementing a new, cross-agency Service Navigation System (SNS). SNS provides a personalized, friendly gateway as well as intake, assessment, and referral to workforce training, education, and supportive services. Specifically, through SNS, the DYWS staff person in the position of "Service Navigator" conducts a comprehensive initial assessment through two to four meetings with a young person, at least one of which includes parents, leading toward development of an Individualized Service Strategy (ISS), and then refers the young person to one or more members of a partnership of six organizations, each of which has multiple funding sources and key competencies. After making referrals, the Service Navigator stays involved and provides oversight for all of the case managers who are working directly with the youth.

SNS has helped overcome perceptions and the experience of many unemployed dropouts or those at risk of dropping out that services were fragmented, redundant, or missing. SNS also provides a youth-friendly parallel to the Career Central workforce one-stop for adults. The range of services to which youth have easier and highly coordinated access includes tutoring and study skills, counseling services and life skills training, alternative schooling with an emphasis on microenterprise and hands-on learning mainly through the Albany Café mobile kitchen, summer employment, occupational skill training, leadership development, mentoring, and follow-up services after placement in a job.

Goals around which the Service Navigator tracks progress include higher graduation rates, better preparation for employment,

and development of life skills among disconnected youth. Biweekly meetings among the service providers help ensure coordinated eligibility determinations, administrative and case management, and maximum leveraging of funding, as well as referral beyond the SNS partnership as needed. The meetings also serve as forums for data sharing.

Albany's growing propensity to explore cross-system opportunities will likely lead it next into concerted efforts to reduce the dropout rate by broadening the range of

high school options and alternatives in the city. In addition, the city and school district have the chance to join forces with an Older Adolescent Work Group of county child welfare and mental health agencies. This could help lead to a common blueprint and strategic plan for cutting across the historically sharp lines between city and county government functions, in the interest of the high concentration of disconnected youth who live within the city boundaries.

Leadership Keys

- **The mayor is a catalyst for collaborative efforts that focus on children and youth.** Through the city's Department of Youth and Workforce Services (DYWS), the mayor facilitates widespread cross-system collaboration among multiple city, county, state, and nonprofit agencies.
- **The Juvenile Justice Accountability Board provides a meeting ground for local leaders.** By staffing this Board, DYWS creates opportunities for key stakeholders to collaborate on major issues such as gang prevention, truancy abatement, youth employment, and dropout recovery.
- **A Service Navigation System helps partners streamline services and track outcomes.** The city's Service Navigation System brings partner agencies together to address a broad range of job training, education, and service needs of disconnected youth.



CASE STUDIES

Boston, Massachusetts

(pop. 559,034)

Multiple Agencies Respond to the Mayor's Vision and Commitment to Act

Boston, Mass., a city with a history of collaboration manifested in the Boston Miracle of the 1990s and Boston Compact of the 1980s, now uses an increasingly broad range of cross-system strategies to improve public safety and reconnect youth to the community.

With youth dropout and unemployment rates still high, the flow of young people returning from juvenile incarceration providing a stiff challenge for schools and neighborhoods, and violence and gang activity prevalent in certain “hot spots,” public safety, education, and youth employment are major concerns in Boston. The workforce development, criminal justice, education, and social service systems have responded to the vision set out by Mayor Thomas Menino – these are our kids – with overlapping efforts based in neighborhoods and schools.

Current collaborations on behalf of disconnected youth in Boston often feature one public system inviting in the strengths of other systems to work toward common goals and produce better results together. Thus, social workers have been posted in neighborhood police stations to connect young people with a comprehensive safety net of services. In another example, career specialists and case managers from the workforce development system begin building relationships with incarcerated juveniles and young adults three to six months prior to release. Upon release, the workforce development agency offers these young people a range of work and training options, including stipended transitional employment.

Similarly, the city-managed schools are experimenting with new educational arrangements for young people returning

from secure detention, including a transition-school step as well as additional per-student funding for the high school upon reenrollment. These arrangements are based on more detailed planning by social workers invited into the secure facilities, as well as post-release supports offered by streetworkers to schools and families.

An ongoing conversation about data and case file sharing across all of the above initiatives has produced working agreements between and among agencies and systems, and laid the groundwork for one of the newest and broadest collaborations for community safety in the Grove Hall neighborhood. In this process, agencies have not abandoned their longstanding perspective on confidentiality; rather, they have explored and implemented what is possible.

How Cross-System Collaboration Works in Boston

● Leadership

Mayor Menino's leadership extends well beyond setting out a vision. His public and private view of disconnected youth, as of other youth, is asset-based and imbues city policy and initiatives. "The fact that a lot of these kids have made a mistake shouldn't mean they're marked for the rest of their lives," says Menino. "These at-risk kids are very smart, they just don't know how to channel their resources." The mayor is also clear on two other key roles he can play for youth: "I can advocate for them, I can put resources toward them." Notably on these fronts, the mayor and his staff put a clear cross-system stamp on the Youth Opportunity initiative, and most recently directed \$1 million in city funds to continue this collaboration between criminal justice and workforce training beyond the original term of a federal grant.

● Lead Agency/Intermediary

With the support of the mayor and through a succession of commissioners, the Boston Police Department (BPD) has served as principal convener of a collaborative that has expanded over time to involve other city, county, and state agencies and systems. Notes one partner, "the Police Department has more credibility to convene youth workers, clergy, and providers than anyone else. The mayor can convene agency heads, and BPD will facilitate discussion of how" to pursue goals on the ground. "BPD has a good track record and has worked on its relationships with people in the community who have good reasons to be mistrustful... They have earned their reputation as decent partners. They share resources; they lead open, transparent processes."

The Police Department might not be the presumed convener in every city. However, in Boston, the department had undergone a significant shift in goal orientation to what can be summarized as "making the community safer," which prepared it for the convening role. Others outside the criminal justice field readily related to and adopted this as a common goal.

Also critically important in shaping the convening role were the Police Department's twin set of institutional realizations that "we can't do it alone," so "we will not take on strategies by ourselves." Such realizations have proved critical over time in maintaining the department's credibility and drive as convener – so important that they stack up as the recommended backbone of convening efforts for other communities. Concretely, the department has built the capacity to bring in a range of grant funds, which it shares with community partners when available.



“The fact that a lot of these kids have made a mistake shouldn’t mean they’re marked for the rest of their lives. These at-risk kids are very smart, they just don’t know how to channel their resources. I can advocate for them, I can put resources toward them.”

— Mayor Thomas M. Menino, City of Boston

Paralleling the Police Department in the city structure, and at times playing co-convening roles, are the Boston Centers for Youth and Families – the city agency that oversees youth development programs and family services – and the Boston Redevelopment Authority’s Jobs and Community Services agency, which oversees education, training, career development, and human services. All three agencies work together on multiple initiatives, each taking the lead where it may make the most sense depending on the principal funding source or expertise required.

● Unique and Noteworthy Aspects

Two aspects of collaboration in Boston are worthy of note for other cities – the role of private philanthropy and the use of community panels. First, public agencies have effectively involved private philanthropy and the business community in joint efforts. Perhaps uniquely, this has translated into some capacity-building and coordination grants being made directly to the Police Department. Private philanthropy in Boston has also played an essential role in bankrolling new approaches, such as the hiring of a workforce development case manager devoted

to smoothing reentry transitions for young people who have been incarcerated.

Second, Boston – along with other cities such as Winston-Salem, N.C. – has adapted an on-the-ground reentry approach that embodies strong collaborative values. Specifically, the city forms and utilizes panels made up of professionals, community representatives, and mentors in at least two settings involving disconnected youth. At the end of each month at each juvenile institution in Boston, a panel convenes to hear about the situation and make recommendations for young people who are ready to reenter the community. Similarly, panels meet near the end of term at the Community Transition School to determine former offenders’ readiness to return to regular school. At a panel meeting, mentors and others in the room take turns speaking to their specific roles in reentry. Typically during a session, a mentor will describe his or her life experience. Through its broad membership, the panel touches clinical needs, job readiness, and social and life skills. The overall message at these panel meetings brings forward the city-wide vision that “these are our kids,” and transforms it into “we will support you, and we will be watching.”

How Collaboration Makes a Difference for Boston's Most Vulnerable Youth

Boston's collaborative approach is working for the city as a whole. Statistics to date show reduced recidivism – and specifically a lower rate of violent offenses – among the formerly-incarcerated young people who receive blended education and workforce development services. So, how do Boston's most vulnerable youth experience the benefits of collaboration?

One way is through the city's neighborhood-based partnership between police and social workers, which operates as the Youth Service Providers Network. This collaboration now presents a friendly, supportive face to 800 new young people per year, along with 1,200 youth who received services in prior years and continue to meet at least occasionally with social workers. Those referred to the network may have contact as brief as intake and assessment, or may stick around for short and longer-term clinical case management, very little of which was available previously. In addition, the collaborative reaches beyond the "treatment" group to provide younger siblings with opportunities such as summer camp. Fundamentally, police officers and social workers report that the young people who receive station-based social work services and referrals more often "make the right choices."

Another example comes in the form of ever more targeted services for families and children, cutting across agencies, in specific "hot spot" neighborhoods. The partners in the Comprehensive Community Safety Initiative pilot in Grove Hall have been able to zero in and provide a range of supports and services to specific children and families who have been and continue to be generationally involved with both social services and law enforcement. Much of this pilot work can be credited to the sophisticated use of geographic information system technology and case and data file sharing. Young people and families in Grove Hall increasingly

witness a team drawn from city, county, and state law enforcement/criminal justice agencies and state social service agencies working together for youth development. Case management coordination also involves the neighboring junior high and high schools.

A third collaboration now being implemented for the hundreds of vulnerable young people emerging each year from juvenile justice detention or commitment, who are unlikely to succeed if they made an immediate return to large comprehensive high schools, is the Community Transition School (CTS). A pilot group of these young people – most of whom previously would have re-enrolled into one high school near the juvenile facility, with few supports – now has the opportunity to readjust to a school environment through CTS for up to one semester. Thanks to joint efforts of the workforce development, juvenile justice, and school systems, the young people have access to services ranging from reading and math remediation to behavioral and psychosocial counseling. Due in part to the collaboration represented in the transition panel that meets with those ready to move on from CTS, students may choose from a much broader set of four educational placement options – GED programs, the Youth Opportunity center, one of a network of alternative schools, or a high school in the Boston Public School system – depending upon which environment suits them best.

Highly collaborative Boston still has work to do – as would any city – on finding ways to sustain collaborations, fully welcoming new system partners, and sharpening the use of data to ensure that the city is achieving desired results. Still, the city stands out for the examples it presents of focused and applied mayoral leadership, a strong convening role built into the Police Department as lead agency, and tangible improvements in the experience of vulnerable young people who come into contact with one or more public systems.

Leadership Keys

- **The Boston Police Department and other city agencies play key convening roles.** In Boston, one public system typically “invites in” the strengths of other systems to work toward common goals and produce better results.
- **Juvenile reentry initiatives support transitions back to school, the workforce, and the community.** Connections between law enforcement, justice, school, workforce, and social services systems have reduced recidivism and created opportunities for juvenile offenders to put their lives on a positive path.
- **Boston increasingly focuses on the needs of entire families.** By sharing data across systems, the city and its partners are providing more targeted, coordinated services to strengthen families and their communities.



CASE STUDIES

San Diego, California

(pop. 1,255,540)

An Intermediary Links City and County Efforts on Public Safety and Child Welfare

Concerted cross-system efforts have led the City of San Diego, and the surrounding county with a total population of three million, into a new and different era for children and youth. Multiple police departments, courts, and parks and children's agencies feed information into and draw from a common database focused on risk and resiliency. The child welfare system in particular has been overhauled and become much more sophisticated about the interplay between substance abuse, literacy, and child abuse. Reunification of children in foster care with their families jumped from 20 percent to 60 percent, and the number entering the system each year dropped by one-third. Reducing the emphasis on out-of-home placement saved the county \$1.6 million in just 50 cases – a 58 percent reduction, and money that could be applied to meet other needs.

San Diego is particularly notable for the way a strong intermediary – The Children's Initiative, a private, nonprofit organization – functions as the convener, connector, and progress monitor of choice throughout the county on issues ranging from juvenile justice to child welfare and beyond. In this context, the developmental process leading to collaboration, the dimensions of municipal vision and leadership, and several of the ways collaboration now works on the ground are all important factors. Collaboration makes a difference for San Diego's young people because it enables holistic approaches, helps focus services on those most in need, and improves communication and data sharing. San Diego's case offers lessons for other cities regarding collective leadership and readiness to learn from experiments.

How Cross-System Collaboration Works in San Diego

Cross-system efforts have been coming together since the early 1990s in San Diego. At that time, systems were not working well or were failing as juvenile crime and related statistics worsened; the need for change was palpable. A combination of leadership, seizing opportunities, broad community engagement, formation of a strong intermediary, recruiting and development of evaluation capacity, and good goal-setting put the city on a course that continues to produce benefits today.

● Leadership

Then-Chief of Police, now-Mayor Jerry Sanders launched a developmental process of trust- and relationship-building that paid huge dividends over the long term. His method was simple: Invite an increasingly diverse group of community leaders to meet regularly. At the meetings were police and probation department leaders, the county prosecutor, sheriff, and U.S. Attorney, as well as judges and people from the youth-serving agency network. Prior to these meetings, notes Sanders, “none of them were talking to each other.” Eventually the group expanded to include representatives of the business community and local hospitals. This period built upon earlier

efforts by leading nonprofit service providers that brought bottom-up pressure on government agencies for collaboration and community involvement. Chief Sanders’ gatherings also took place at the same time that the Police Department adopted a thorough community policing and problem-solving strategy – essential groundwork for police collaboration with many other agencies in the region – and throughout, Sanders had strong backing from the city manager.

Others stepped forward to take leadership roles as well. Retired Judge James Milliken embodies passion when he comments on the situation he found when assuming his duties as presiding judge on the Juvenile Court. “I couldn’t believe it took us three years to terminate parental rights,” said Milliken. “I couldn’t believe that long-term foster care was the best solution. I couldn’t believe how many kids we were sending at such expense to juvenile hall. I was horrified at how routinely court orders were violated.” Mayor Sanders credits Judge Milliken with “idea after idea after idea at Juvenile Court” and notes that the judge “forced the Probation Department to start doing things they wouldn’t traditionally do.”

Ron Roberts, a key partner of the judge on the County Board of Supervisors, drew



“I grew up in public housing in Watertown, Massachusetts. I looked at programs for youth in other states [and helped bring them to San Diego] because... there but for the grace of God go I.”

— Ron Roberts, Chairman, San Diego County Board of Supervisors

motivation from his own experience participating in youth development programs: “I grew up in public housing in Watertown, Massachusetts,” said Roberts. “I looked at programs for youth in other states [and helped bring them to San Diego] because...there but for the grace of God go I.” Both Chief Probation Officer Vincent Iaria and his predecessor Alan Crogan noted the advantages of coordinated prevention and reentry strategies. “We can save the state a lot of money and keep kids out of jail,” says Iaria.

The leaders saw and seized key opportunities when San Diego had a chance to compete for one of the first three slots in the U.S. Department of Justice’s Comprehensive Strategy initiative and the California State Assembly passed several pieces of legislation designed to promote comprehensive approaches. These opportunities put additional resources on the table, and offered useful structures for proceeding. San Diego conducted a thorough community engagement process involving people from various sectors such as policy, departmental, and community leaders, as well as line staff and community members. Participants in the community engagement process were especially helpful in identifying needs and gaps, such as the notion that the Police Department itself was not best qualified to run youth programs.

● **Lead Agency/Intermediary**

The community engagement process helped point to the need for a neutral convening body to push for and help bring about better collaboration. San Diego acted upon this need by turning to The Children’s Initiative (TCI), a nonprofit intermediary organization that had been created through previous community engagement efforts. A major emphasis of TCI’s role over the years has been to “teach grown people to share,”

according to Sandra McBrayer, the organization’s CEO. For example, TCI helped form and continues to staff the Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council (JJCC), a meeting ground and policymaking body that brings together various systems, including criminal and juvenile justice, education, business, and human service providers. Formally, TCI’s mission is “to assist children, youth, and families in reaching their full potential by working for integrated service delivery systems that promote the values of collaboration and prevention, and for measurable outcomes in the fields of health, education, safety, and economic security.” In addition to its efforts in these areas and in juvenile justice, TCI also works in the overlapping fields of afterschool and mentoring.

San Diego built the intermediary role for TCI in substantial part through the process of developing its Comprehensive Strategy for Youth, Family, and Community in the mid-1990s. With funding provided for strategy development and early implementation from federal juvenile justice sources, the community began leaning early toward collaborative framing and approaches. McBrayer comments that the process of developing the strategy drew upon ever-broader points of view by noting that “talking about the whole vision meant that no one could not be at the table,” and that vision is CLEAR – “for all of San Diego’s youth to develop into caring, literate, educated and responsible community members.”

Cross-system collaboration appears as one of the six key areas of San Diego’s Comprehensive Strategy blueprint, along with prevention, intervention, graduated sanctions, blended funding, and data sharing. As the planning phase came to an end, TCI assumed a role that it maintains today as “principal coordinator for

sustaining the Comprehensive Strategy partnerships and its implementation.” Beyond the public safety concerns driving the Comprehensive Strategy, TCI staff and board members help keep a focus on agreed central policy aims such as family reunification, beefing up protective factors (rather than only trying to reduce risk factors), lessening the number of young people in lockups and experiencing lengthy stays in foster care, and emphasizing neighborhood and holistic approaches. Operationally, sticking with these central aims helps clarify priorities and focuses efforts. For instance, working toward the agreed upon goal that “foster kids have to be permanently placed within a year” brought the average time to placement down from more than 40 months to 14.

TCI exemplifies and fulfills its intermediary role in several ways. A key TCI function is to reduce risk for individual systems and agencies, and to empower those systems and agencies to take action. For instance, McBrayer notes that, “we share the successes, and The Children’s Initiative resolves all issues and conflicts.” She stresses how important it is to follow through and keep her word in efforts to make individual coalition members stay engaged. Also, funds from multiple systems come together to support staffing for collaborative efforts. “I come out of three budgets now, and I’m in for five more years,” notes Brook Smith, coordinator of the Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council based at TCI.

TCI’s governance by a powerful board of directors permits the organization to transcend city and county splits and squabbles. “Most organizations have one or two of these people – a judge, a school superintendent,” says McBrayer. “We have a whole room full.” Last but not least, TCI’s staffing of the Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council helps hold the

county supervisors and member agencies responsible for abiding by research-based practices and for keeping prevention at the forefront of the county’s efforts. TCI backs up this accountability role by seeking out funding opportunities and coordinating grant applications for Council member organizations, often involving multiple partners under one grant application.

A recent round of state budget-cutting created a challenge, which TCI and its multiple system partners met in interesting fashion. A longtime CBO leader, whose agency is involved with several public systems, commented that “I thought that when the cuts came down that they’d cut out the community work. They didn’t.” In the same time period, Iaria, the newly-appointed chief of probation, gathered his staff and asked for a briefing on proposed cuts – only to learn that his department would undergo some cuts, something he wouldn’t have expected in the New York jurisdiction where he worked previously. “I couldn’t quite believe it. ‘You mean we have to take a hit, too?’ I asked my staff,” says Iaria. “They said, ‘Yes sir.’” One participant describes the process as carried out by the JJCC’s Technical Work Group: “Providers were concerned about the system as a whole. We figured out as a group what would be the cost of core services in the face of state cuts, and allocated local cuts [proportionately].” The public safety research director of the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) confirms that she “still sees people coming to the table to leverage funds for the region as a whole...Even with the cuts they still believe in prevention.”

● Unique and Noteworthy Aspects

Several aspects of San Diego’s cross-system collaborations for youth are worthy of mention: built-in evaluation



“We can save the state a lot of money and keep kids out of jail.”

— Vincent J. Iaria, San Diego County Chief Probation Officer

capacity; a drive for efficiency and a commitment to spend money saved on deeper programming; and data-sharing approaches with immediate, ground-level applications.

Notably, the city, along with the county government and the 17 other municipalities in San Diego County, has effectively cultivated a built-in evaluator to produce readily applicable information. In this case, it is the regional planning agency SANDAG that has built and maintains significant capacity for evaluating public safety initiatives arising from collaborative planning efforts. This creates a feedback loop for field efforts to reach and help youth. The lead evaluator considers herself a partner of the collaborators working on system and program improvement: “I’m not in academia. I’m here to give people the numbers so that they can improve programs and policies for kids. We’re all working to make San Diego a better place. I get real-time information out to the field.”

Indeed, most SANDAG evaluations are based on “ride-alongs” and conversations with line staff. Currently, the agency provides updated information bimonthly to the Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council. The agency also publishes several new reports each year analyzing specific programs and changes in risk and protective factors across programs. Another use of SANDAG’s evaluation capacity came

up during recent tight fiscal times. The county chief of probation credits the JJCC and SANDAG with “helping him figure out what programs weren’t so effective, what could be weeded out.”

San Diego also stands out because its drive for greater efficiency and commitment to spend money saved on better programming has produced results over the long term. Indeed, San Diego has witnessed early and continuing significant drops in the number of young people in custodial placement. Reunification of foster youth went from 20 percent to 60 percent, and overall, more than 90 percent of foster youth were either reunified, adopted (25 percent), or had a guardian appointed (8 percent). The overall number of new foster care cases shrank from 2,500 to 1,700 per year. Meanwhile the juvenile justice system reduced the population at the local Juvenile Hall by one-third, and the population committed to the California Youth Authority by more than 50 percent.

San Diego sold its proposed system reforms – and maintains support for them to this day – thanks to a commitment to pay for any additional or deeper programs with savings. For instance, reducing the emphasis on out-of-home placement saved the county \$1.6 million in just 50 cases – a 58 percent reduction in costs confirmed in a 2003 evaluation by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health



“Talking about the whole vision meant that no one
could not be at the table.”

— Sandra McBrayer, CEO, The Children’s Initiative

Administration (SAMHSA). Services including emergency shelter care, psychological evaluations, drug testing, case management, counseling, and foster and group home support are still available as needed. SAMHSA’s evaluators noted, “The [savings] results were positive for all of the major components of the foster care system – emergency shelter, foster home support, group home support.”

A third component of San Diego’s successful overall approach involves its embrace of data and information sharing. Early in their efforts to collaborate, school districts, police departments, community-based organizations, and others recognized the need for a means to capture and share information about young people and families with whom they came into contact. One part of the solution was the creation of the one-page San Diego Regional Risk and Resiliency Checkup form. Any police officer or case-worker can fill out this form, noting risk factors and protective factors for the youth and family and arriving at a bottom line score. Using the concept of a blood pressure check, a reading outside the normal range alerts a person to possible health problems, allows families to take steps to avoid harm, and triggers referrals to services. The form itself has been revised and updated over a several-year period, and beginning in 2003 all information was coded into an encrypted database to permit even easier sharing of data.

Thanks to a court order, schools got beyond an initial unwillingness to participate. As a “point in time” document, the Checkup, when used again for the same young person, has helped demonstrate that more young people exit programs with higher protective factor scores.

San Diego also made full use of available technology by creating a database containing information on each young person on probation. This database, encrypted and available online, is available for the shared use of Juvenile Probation, police departments, and school disciplinary officials throughout the county. This system provides near-real-time information because it allows nightly posting of revised terms of probation, as well as school attendance records.

Another database lays the groundwork for improved communication and data sharing for young people in group care experiencing school transfers. To eliminate barriers or delays that might often occur when switching between schools, as well as the need for often redundant intake interviews, several agencies worked together to create the Foster Youth Information System. This database is designed specifically to contain health, education, and placement information for more than 9,000 San Diego County wards and dependents. The database, accessible online to 300 users in the agencies noted above as well as school districts, provides immediate access to immunization information, as

well as the expedient transfer of health and education records. A public health nurse enters immunization and health information; the Juvenile Court enters information regarding the educational status and rights of the young people.

How Collaboration Makes a Difference for San Diego's Most Vulnerable Youth

In addition to the many benefits flowing from better information sharing and deeper services, San Diego's disconnected youth benefit daily from cross-system collaborations. For instance, several systems work with juvenile probation to treat the "whole person" and whole family as needed. Responding to a consistent observation that low literacy and substance abuse were common conditions, young people seeking release from the juvenile probation system must now demonstrate improved literacy as well as avoidance of illegal substances. The Lindamood-Bell literacy program was one initiative implemented by a collaboration of Juvenile Court, the County Office of Education, the District Attorney's Office, and the Probation Department for San Diego's young probationers. One study found that "treatment clients' post-test scores increased significantly more in all areas, compared to those in the comparison group." In a similar vein, participation in the Substance Abuse Recovery Management System (SARMS) is required for parents seeking reunification with their children.

For specific populations such as transitioning foster youth, cross-system efforts provide vastly scaled-up opportunities. Having determined to focus on this population, the region now devotes more than 40 percent of its federal Workforce Investment Act youth funds to provide comprehensive employability training, paid internships, and long-term case management for young people transitioning from foster care. Meanwhile, at the workforce system

level, a new Capacity Building Committee of the local Youth Council is examining ways to further improve coordination between and among systems.

An earlier cross-system project resulted in much more solid residential options for foster teens. Thanks to this large-scale project, 135 foster teens now have the option to live at San Pasqual Academy, a purpose-built residential education facility. Programmatic emphases at San Pasqual include education completion, work readiness and self-sufficiency, and health and wellness. Meanwhile, an overlapping group of agencies are seeking to improve the housing situation for youth aging out of foster care. A co-funded staff position supports an effort to apply federal HOME funding to develop scattered-site apartments for 84 youth, as well as county government jobs if needed.

Also, cross-system collaboration has resulted in community-based organizations sharing responsibility for services for children and families, and co-locating staff with other agencies to ensure that families have "no wrong door." For instance, a young person living on San Diego's southern tier is likely to find his or her way to one among the myriad youth-friendly service offerings of the South Bay Community Services (SBCS) agency. Over the years, through public-public and public-nonprofit sector collaborations, and with support from municipal leaders, SBCS has come to play a part in efforts such as juvenile diversion with four different suburban police agencies, day treatment for youth on probation with substance abuse needs, transitional housing and independent living schools for those who have aged out of the foster care system, and Family Resource Centers on school sites in five districts.

As with many other cities, opportunities as well as challenges lie ahead for the avid cross-system collaborators in San Diego. TCI and its multi-system partners are looking to

smooth transitions for young people coming out of the juvenile justice system, as measured by having prevented involvement in the adult criminal justice system. In addition, the workforce, child welfare, and education agencies now involved with child welfare system integration efforts are making plans to “go deeper” on a number of topics, including the transition of older youth out of foster care. Overall, San Diego stands at an important developmental point, with new leadership having assumed control in several systems – Juvenile Court, Probation, the Police Department, Child Welfare Services – a newly elected mayor in place, and a switch having occurred from the council-manager to the strong-mayor form of government.

In addition to its stated goals, future challenges for the city appear on the horizon,

including the need to carry forward the city’s momentum with a largely new set of leading players. These challenges include building upon existing strong services for youth delivered through multiple systems that better meet the needs of 18-24 year olds transitioning into adulthood, obtaining and institutionalizing the active involvement of more city government agencies beyond the Police Department, and obtaining full engagement by the city’s multiple school districts in cross-system solutions. Due to its location, San Diego also faces an overall challenge of keeping up with the rising numbers of Latino/English Language Learner young people involved with public care systems, as well as the dynamics brought about by the movement of young people and their families both ways across the U.S.-Mexico border.

Leadership Keys

- **A strong intermediary implements and sustains a city-county strategy carried forward from the mid-1990s to the present day.** The Children’s Initiative, selected as a trusted intermediary after a thorough community engagement process, plays an important role in fostering city-county partnerships for youth in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems.
- **San Diego’s focus on prevention leads to increased savings that can be reinvested in meeting additional needs.** An emphasis on reducing the number of youth in foster care or juvenile detention, enhancing protective factors, improving literacy, preventing substance abuse and maintaining vital services in the face of budget cuts all highlight a commitment to prevention that has generated efficiencies and cost savings.
- **Strong data-sharing and evaluation capacity help partner agencies determine what’s working and how youth are faring.** By collaborating through the regional planning agency, sharing data regarding youth on probation or in foster care, and creating standardized evaluation measures, San Diego maintains a consistent focus on risk and protective factors that helps guide and evaluate various programs.



CASE STUDIES

Baltimore, Maryland

(pop. 635,815)

Alternative Education Bridges Gap Between Workforce Preparation and Public Schools

Baltimore is home to an estimated 60,000 older disconnected youth, a rise of 19 percent since 2000. Within the Empowerment Zone that touches 33 residential neighborhoods, 60 percent of the youth population lives in extreme poverty, and youth experience an unemployment rate of 42.5 percent – 2.5 times the rate for adults. High school graduation rates are very low as well.

In recent years, Baltimore has made major advances in connecting its workforce training and education systems for disconnected youth, and more generally in moving toward an approach that could be labeled “one system with all youth in mind.” Current highlights of cross-system efforts involving the Mayor’s Office of Employment Development (MOED) and the Baltimore City Public Schools include operation of a Career Academy for dropouts, a recently

launched career/college-focused high school, and a dropout prevention program.

How Cross-System Collaboration Works in Baltimore

For the thousands of young people in Baltimore who have dropped out of school, the city’s Career Academy provides a means to get back on track. The Academy provides a non-traditional education option for 150 out-of-school youth ages 16-21 per year. Newly returning students at the Academy may pursue a high school diploma with a business/technical concentration, a GED, or participate in the Diploma Plus program with Baltimore City Community College. Students also participate in workplace training in high-demand, high-growth fields such as business technology, human services, landscaping, and information technology, and serve internships with employers for

further work-based learning. Opportunities for youth and leadership development, as well as cultural and social enrichment, suffuse the experience.

Career Academy draws its main support from the Baltimore City Workforce Investment Board and the school district, while also engaging many other partners. Formally, Career Academy is one of nine campuses of Harbor City High School. Thanks to this status, the school district provides instructional materials and personnel, connects students to additional curriculum elements on other high school campuses, and offers summer remediation using the PLATO computer-based learning system. Two local community colleges, two Job Corps centers, and numerous other partners are also involved. A broad-based Advisory Board provides input and brings partners together regularly.

As a complement to the Career Academy, MOED and the schools combined efforts again to open a new public high school in 2004 to provide better, more diverse options for high school students and to lower the dropout rate while providing a beacon of change for the overall school system. The Academy for College and Career Exploration (ACCE) is one of four “innovation high schools” currently operating in the district, and receives supplemental state funding through a \$500,000 grant over five years. ACCE opened with 150 entering ninth-grade students (selected by lottery) and is designed as a small learning environment for a maximum of 400 students. Baltimore City Public Schools provided eight certified teachers for ACCE in the first year of operation, a number that will grow in proportion to the growth of the student body. MOED hired the school’s director from outside the school system, but he became part of the principals’ union upon filling the post.

Designed with strong support and adaptation of approaches from around the country with

the help of the Sar Levitan Center of Johns Hopkins University, ACCE offers individualized instruction, a longer school day, year-round learning, and smaller class sizes to ensure personal attention and support. As the name suggests, ACCE’s thematic emphasis is exploration, postsecondary education, and career opportunities. The population of students is similar in makeup to those attending other city schools with test scores that vary widely. In fact, at entry, an equal amount of students score below the fourth grade level as above the ninth grade level.

ACCE also enriches student learning by reaching beyond the classroom walls through special programs and activities sponsored by ACCE’s partners, including the Baltimore Workforce Investment Board, the mayor’s cabinet, city agencies, Johns Hopkins University, and Baltimore City Community College. Students who pass their classes are guaranteed a spot in the city’s YouthWorks summer jobs program. Through a relationship with Baltimore City Community College, ACCE students may also use a self-paced, computer-based credit recovery program for summer school at a downtown site.

● Leadership

Comments from a former mayoral aide and a city department head explain the leadership that former Mayor Martin O’Malley provided for cross-system efforts, as well as the rationale for that leadership. “The mayor wanted to see community investment, families moving back in, and increased public safety. Schools are a key part of that picture, and the mayor and city agencies need to play a greater role” in ensuring that schools meet the challenge, said one aide. Current Mayor Sheila Dixon is also extremely supportive of and committed to youth development, youth employment programs, and youth engagement, and has lent her endorsement and financial



“Both mayors have recognized the importance of having the head of the city engaged in the educational process – not in the classroom, but overall.”

— Karen Sitnick, Director, Mayor’s Office of Employment Development (MOED), on the efforts of Mayor Sheila Dixon and former Mayor Martin O’Malley on behalf of disconnected youth

support to MOED’s youth efforts. MOED Director Karen Sitnick adds that “both mayors have recognized the importance of having the head of the city engaged in the educational process – not in the classroom, but overall.”

● Lead Agency/Intermediary

MOED has consistently taken the lead in promoting cross-system efforts and has obtained the resources and training needed to branch out into new areas such as school operation. Over the most recent five-year period, MOED hosted the Youth Opportunity (YO!) Baltimore effort to serve out-of-school and disconnected youth and brought in the city’s Health and Parks and Recreation Departments as partners. MOED’s role with YO! Baltimore constitutes part of its longstanding and continuing effort to build an inter-connected system of services for this population.

An example of one way MOED’s reach extends to broader systemic concerns, such as dropout prevention, is its role with the schools in running the Futures program for 9th-12th grade students who are at risk of dropping out. Futures uses personal coaching and other youth development support services to assist students in reducing social problems and improving academic success. Futures students consistently achieve a dropout

rate of about half that of other students at their schools. More than 75 percent of Futures students become employed or go to college right after graduation.

How Collaboration Makes a Difference for Baltimore’s Most Vulnerable Youth

Recent tabulations of results from the Youth Opportunity network, which included five neighborhood youth employment and education centers for out-of-school youth and four high schools, suggest that the city’s cross-system efforts are paying off. Participants in YO! earned 35 percent more and were employed at a 42 percent higher rate than non-participants, and were one third less likely to be arrested and convicted. Out-of-school youth achieved GEDs at twice the rate of non-participants. The dropout rate for in-school members was half the rate of the general population at the four targeted schools. Young women involved in YO! were 25 percent less likely to become pregnant and give birth than non-participants.

Another major collaboration between a city department and the school system beginning under Mayor O’Malley highlighted the commitment to reduce dropout and truancy rates by improving physical facilities and thus student and teacher morale. SchoolStat was the name given to an arrangement in which the city Bureau of

General Services acted as the prime facilities and maintenance contractor for Baltimore City Public Schools, overseeing work orders and priorities. The city asked school custodians and facility managers detailed questions, and convened a weekly meeting for better coordination of efforts and capital project planning. Through these means, the Bureau and the school district worked together to begin eliminating backlogs and recurring problems. The city quickly

queued up 3,300 work order requests in its system, and the city's Departments of Social Services and Health, as well as MOED, are building on the physical success of SchoolStat to institute multi-service community centers in 30-40 schools. Notes former mayoral aide David Costello, "We're building broader constituencies. The more people and groups get into the schools, the more people are vested" in the outcomes the schools produce.

Leadership Keys

- **A strong partnership between the city's workforce system and the school district seeks to lower Baltimore's dropout rate.** Collaboration between the Mayor's Office of Employment Development (MOED) and Baltimore City Public Schools has created new career and postsecondary educational options for students who have dropped out or are at risk of dropping out.
- **Mayoral leadership ensures that community revitalization efforts address the educational needs of out-of-school and at-risk youth.** Both the current and former mayors have placed the needs of struggling students high on their agendas, providing a continuum of services and supports through MOED.



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CASE STUDIES
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Corpus Christi, Texas

(pop. 283,474)

The City Parks and Recreation Department Anchors a Public Safety Effort

Corpus Christi, a medium-sized city on the Texas Gulf Coast, and surrounding Nueces County consistently show up as among the poorest areas in Texas. More than one quarter of the city's children live in poverty, and teen pregnancy and child maltreatment rates are among the highest in the state. The percentage of the area's population 25 and older with a high school diploma is 75 percent – slightly lower than the state average of 77 percent – and the current four-year high school dropout rate hovers around 35 percent.

Corpus Christi is notable in two ways for its efforts to improve young peoples' lives and community safety through cross-system collaboration. First, the city has carried forward and continuously improved approaches launched over a decade ago under state and national juve-

nile justice initiatives, with leadership along the way from several mayors, city managers, police chiefs, judges, city agency heads, and community partners. Second, the city has done all this with minimal public resources through the combined efforts of an unstaffed and highly focused public-private coalition, a Parks and Recreation Department that anchors a wide range of activities, and a research center at the local state university with the ability to collect and sift through reams of compelling trend and outcome data. The city can point to results over time such as decreased teen pregnancy rates, juvenile arrests, and dropout rates. In addition, the city has institutionalized cross-system operations in a manner best seen in its Juvenile Assessment Center and Municipal Court branch for youth.

How Cross-System Collaboration Works in Corpus Christi

The Juvenile Assessment Center (JAC), a division of Corpus Christi's Parks and Recreation Department, is a cross-system diversion effort that exemplifies the city's commitment to supporting youth and family development. The JAC is open around the clock, and is the place where police bring youth identified as violating daytime or nighttime curfews for social service interventions. Instead of locking up or punishing those young people, the JAC provides referrals to a wide range of social services and releases young people to their parents with an offer of three months of comprehensive, free case management services. Many agencies are represented among the group of JAC partners to provide several types of interventions. Some of these agencies include the local school district, the County Juvenile Justice Center, Planned Parenthood, the local Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, and Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi.

In its first four years of operation, well over 3,000 Corpus Christi youth and their families passed through the JAC's doors. Support for its operation comes from a combination of sales tax receipts administered by the local Crime Control and Prevention District, recently renewed by public vote, and city General Fund money. The JAC justifies its funding along at least

two measures – the money that it keeps in school district hands, and prevention of delinquency. The JAC's statistics show that the “pre-delinquency court and case management process prevented delinquency in 93 percent of cases.”

Conveniently located at the same site as the JAC as a further example of cross-system collaboration is a courtroom of the Corpus Christi Municipal Juvenile Court (MJC). Here, the no-nonsense Judge Deanie King hears cases of youth ages 17 or younger charged with violations of curfew, traffic, and other “Class C” city ordinances, which do not involve possession of illicit substances, public intoxication, or theft or mischief with a value over \$50. Judge King requires juvenile offenders – and their parents – to appear in open court for all proceedings. She typically orders pre-delinquent offenders into case management at the JAC, as a condition of deferred disposition. Those with more serious offenses face a range of fines or jail time. The MJC has earned support from local police as well as the overcrowded county juvenile court, in part because it allows those agencies to concentrate on more serious cases.

● Leadership

The commitment and experience of the key elected and professional leaders of the city permeate the cross-system efforts. Mayor Henry Garrett, who is also the city's former Police Chief, commented that



“You can’t talk about the long-term workforce and local economy without looking at the drag that unemployed and undertrained workers could have.”

— George “Skip” Noe, City Manager, Corpus Christi, Texas



“Programs here could not survive without the collaborations and without working together.

There is just so much diversity within the community.”

— Sally Gavlik, Director, Department of Parks and Recreation, Corpus Christi, Texas

“we’ve come a long way since we formed the Crime Prevention District. Now we’re seeing if we can help some high-risk individuals” through the Juvenile Assessment Center and Municipal Court. City Manager George “Skip” Noe expands on this statement when focusing on the city’s rising attention to the dropout rate: “You can’t not think about the impact of a significant part of your population on your long-term future. You can’t talk about the long-term workforce and local economy without looking at the drag that unemployed and undertrained workers could have.”

● **Lead Agency/Intermediary**

Corpus Christi’s Parks and Recreation Department plays a key intermediary and hosting role for citywide, cross-system efforts as well as targeted programs. One department staffer described the agency’s role as “to see how it can help others, and be the mediator sometimes.” If there is a theme linking the many programs housed within parks and recreation, it is prevention. The department is also equipped to play a more technical “linking” role, and is spearheading efforts to connect computer systems of the school district, city, and county juvenile justice agency.

Department Director Sally Gavlik, noting another reason for the Parks and Recreation Department to serve as a hub, says “programs here could not survive

without the collaborations and without working together. There is just so much diversity within the community.” Under Gavlik’s leadership, the department frequently absorbs the cost of city employees’ time spent on back office services such as accounting. The department has also regularly contributed program staff’s services in kind to collaborative efforts.

Two activities illustrate the Parks and Recreation Department’s hosting role. The department serves as fiscal agent for the large-scale 78415 Community Youth Development program (CYD) funded through the state Department of Family and Protective Services, which subcontracts with six nonprofits to provide services in one zip code area. Corpus Christi is one of 15 sites around the state to receive such funding targeted toward prevention of juvenile delinquency. The Parks and Recreation Department is also the long-time host of Corpus Christi’s Weed and Seed program, which it jointly administers with the city’s Police Department. Along the way, department staff also helped local youth service agencies launch a providers’ forum called the Coastal Bend Alliance for Youth.

● **YOU – a Cross-System Meeting Ground**

Throughout much of the past dozen years, Corpus Christi’s success grew out of its use of a well-defined cross-system

“meeting ground,” first to formulate the juvenile delinquency-focused comprehensive strategy adopted in 1999 and then as an implementing coalition to carry that strategy forward. In each case, the name of the coalition and the strategy was the same: Youth Opportunities United (YOU). Key leaders of the YOU coalition have included the City of Corpus Christi, Nueces County, United Way of the Coastal Bend, the local chamber of commerce, the school district, and the workforce development board.

The specific roles of YOU have included planning, data gathering, and monitoring. The head of the local United Way described YOU as “a collaboration among peer organizations – each one of us trusting and working together. We have open discussions about how to make things work. Each has taken the lead when we need to, and followed when we need to follow.” For several years, United Way housed a proposal writer who sought funds to implement the strategy. A long-time volunteer notes that having United Way involved provided a “neutral party” and “nonprofit spirit” to the enterprise. Today, the institutionalized cross-system efforts represented in the JAC and the ongoing project hosting role of the Parks and Recreation Department help fulfill many of the functions formerly carried out by YOU.

● **Unique and Noteworthy Aspects**

Data collection and analysis have also been among the strong points of Corpus Christi’s efforts, rooted in one of YOU’s working group. The Social Science

Research Center at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi has supported the efforts of this work group, and produced an annual Risk Factor Report for many years. Discussions about the strengths and needs of Corpus Christi youth proceed today with frequent use of the terms “protective factors” and “risk factors.”

An aspect of Corpus Christi’s model worth noting is its “low overhead approach.” The use of a “virtual intermediary” structure without a dedicated staff contributed to keeping costs low. The collaborative has paid for data collection and interpretation with funds raised over and above direct service project costs. YOU has also tapped the local Kenedy Memorial Foundation and Coastal Bend Community Foundation for strategic contributions.

Last but not least, Corpus Christi has also applied good strategic thinking throughout its cross-system efforts. One person involved since the beginning described Corpus Christi’s various collaborations as combining into an effort to ensure “good bones” on which initiatives and programs can be built – much as builders in the community do best when they ensure sound structures to meet frequent hurricanes. Good bones means that the structures in place can readily add on another needed program such as substance abuse training and treatment in schools, and demonstrate significantly higher outcomes, which in turn may be “converted” into more funding to meet more needs.

Leadership Keys

- **The centerpiece of the city’s public safety strategy is a long-lasting collaboration institutionalized through a city agency.** The Parks and Recreation Department serves as a pivotal intermediary for collaborative efforts led by the Youth Opportunities United coalition, and seeks to promote public safety through the prevention of juvenile delinquency.
- **Intervention services offer options for youth when early signs of trouble emerge.** Partnerships among the juvenile court, school district, and local nonprofits help the Juvenile Assessment Center steer youth in a more positive direction.
- **Partners tap local assets to strengthen planning and monitoring efforts.** Corpus Christi utilizes the expertise of a local university for data collection and analysis and leverages support from community foundations to build on current efforts.



CASE STUDIES

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

(pop. 1,463,281)

Multiple Partners Join Forces to Reengage High School Dropouts

Philadelphia, the nation's fifth largest city, has for the past several years witnessed a resurgence of attention to children and youth at the highest levels. The city is remarkable for the interest and leadership shown by the mayor and his wife, a professional youth worker. The resurgence has also featured the development and effective functioning of intermediaries concerned with children and youth, a creative application of resources, and the creation of a Children's Investment Strategy to promote and monitor successful transitions to adulthood.

Of particular note are the ways that municipal leaders have brought together systems concerned with meeting the workforce preparation and education needs of disconnected youth. Cross-system efforts in the city are also bringing these systems together with juvenile justice and child

welfare to reduce homelessness and youth violence and to increase access to college and other opportunities.

How Cross-System Collaboration Works in Philadelphia

Three specific steps taken by the City of Philadelphia under the cross-system banner are worth highlighting for the way they make a difference for youth. One involves getting out-of-school youth back on track educationally, another involves helping older foster youth make the transition to adulthood, and a third involves reducing violence among youth in the city who are most likely to kill or be killed.

1. Dropout Options

The city's out-of-school young people may re-enroll in school via two entry points. One is located in school district facilities, the

other hosted at several community-based agencies with funding from the workforce system. In this manner, young people reconnect with engaging alternative education, advance on a relatively rapid track toward graduation, and gain occupational skills. The two mutually reinforcing, coordinated entry points are:

- Educational Options Programs (EOPs) at high schools, for young people ages 16-21 with sufficient credits to be classified at the tenth grade level or higher. EOPs offer classes in the early evening to permit flexible schedules for child care or day jobs, and a chance to earn four core credits each year (by taking up to two 90-minute classes per semester, over the course of 115 teaching days); and
- Companion Programs at community-based organizations, some with a particular ethnic group or neighborhood specialty, offering courses leading to elective credits in a context of wraparound supports, services, and referrals. The courses focus on workplace competencies such as job readiness, interpersonal communication, and customer service and retail skills. One Companion Program has developed a sector-specific course in digital media.

The current Companion Program partnerships, involving five community-based organizations and seven high schools, represent an evolution from the days of the Philadelphia School District's well-known Twilight Schools. Viewed from a workforce system perspective, the partnerships also constitute an effort to make dwindling dollars go further and increase the chance that youth will progress on career as well as academic fronts. To make the partnership workable, school district staff review and approve curricula for the elective credits that are offered off-site from regular high schools.

2. Achieving Independence Center

Philadelphia youth ages 16-24 who are in, or who have recently exited from foster care, may become members of the Achieving Independence Center (AIC) – a comprehensive one-stop center now being replicated in several cities around the country. AIC offers transitioning foster youth strong links to employment and education. To meet the manifold needs of these young people “on their own” at an early age, AIC also offers housing referrals, mentoring, healthy relationships seminars, and paid hands-on training for the hospitality industry. Specific youth-friendly aspects of AIC include:

- Support for staying in school, getting promoted to the next grade, returning to high school, graduating from high school, and progressing to college or other post-secondary education. By 2005, 143 members of AIC had graduated from high school, and 120 members had enrolled in college or other post-secondary education;
- Help obtaining employment for 394 members, including 126 who have obtained subsidized training at the on-site Independence Café for those interested in hospitality or food service careers;
- A safe space and internet access;
- A sense of ownership provided through AIC's “membership model,” in which youth are “members” (rather than clients, students, or trainees) of the center as long as they are eligible by age and status. Members select the services they need and want, and have rights and responsibilities;
- Easy access to the online Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment planning tool and follow-up counseling; and
- An “Opportunity Passport” point system by which members can accumulate up to \$2,100 upon exiting AIC for use in pursuing next steps including education.

AIC originally developed as a partnership between the city Department of Human Services and the Philadelphia Workforce Development Corporation (PWDC), realized through a joint management contract with Arbor Employment and Training. The state Department of Public Welfare and nearly one dozen additional agencies provide services on site. Over time, the Philadelphia Youth Network has taken over the workforce lead from PWDC. The multiple partners are needed in part to deliver a broad range of services, and to handle the sheer scale of AIC, which between late 2002 and April 2005 saw nearly 1,200 enrollments (30 percent out of care, 70 percent in care – the involvement of 500 additional young people per year represents just under one-third of the number eligible in the city). AIC operates at a transit-convenient downtown location with 9,000 feet of program space on an annual budget of \$1.5 million, of which \$1.1 million represents Chafee Independent Living funds.

3. Youth Violence Reduction Partnership

Young people ages 7-24 in five of Philadelphia's 25 police districts who are most at risk of killing or being killed have gained access to more comprehensive and coordinated services for the past seven years through the city's Youth Violence Reduction Partnership (YVRP), and those services are becoming available in more parts of the city as well. Young people identified through past involvement in or prox-

imity to violence become "youth partners" of YVRP. Youth partners receive frequent home visits and case management by probation officers, as well as additional positive supports, such as help getting jobs, from streetworkers employed by a community-based agency. Streetworkers, probation officers, and police work together as a team to provide supports and to improve surveillance and intelligence.

The cross-system support for YVRP extends from all of its partners, including the District Attorney's office, the Managing Director's office, the police and probation departments, family court, the Department of Human Services, the school district, and other agencies. Concerted efforts touching some 2,300 youth partners have reduced the number of youth homicides by approximately 40 percent in the areas where YVRP operates.

How Cross-System Efforts in Philadelphia Came About

Several years ago, the regionally-focused William Penn Foundation supported creation of the city's most complete blueprint to date on the situation of out-of-school, out-of-work young adults. The Blueprint identified a fragmentation of services, the small percentage of eligible older youth being reached, and the absence of comprehensive planning for this population. The Blueprint also served as a touchstone for planning and implementing new initiatives.



Philadelphia has witnessed a resurgence

of attention to children and youth at the highest levels
of city government.



Cross-system efforts in Philadelphia

are bringing the workforce development and education systems together with juvenile justice and child welfare to reduce homelessness and youth violence and to increase access to college and other opportunities.

Picking up the torch from the Blueprint, the city's Youth Council emerged as the citywide forum for discussion and development of new, more coordinated approaches that blend workforce preparation and education for all youth. The Council's Out-of-School Youth (OSY) Subcommittee, established in 2003, has come to serve as an essential meeting ground for priority-setting and strategic planning for older disconnected youth in the city, fulfilling a recommendation in the Blueprint.

The subcommittee has continued to grow and extend its partnership reach, and through Philadelphia Youth Network (PYN) staff, has been active in mapping funding and services, identifying gaps in services, and pushing for integration among the various databases in which youth data appear. Other recent projects involve conducting research on best practices in meeting the needs of young adults with very low literacy skills, and reviewing the professional development needs of workers in the city's direct service provider agencies. The OSY Subcommittee and its member agencies have also focused on how to address any barriers presented by agencies such as the school district and Department of Human Services that would prevent better connections or "hand-offs" between agencies.

● Lead Agency/Intermediary

The 1999 launch and subsequent development of the Philadelphia Youth Network (PYN) as an independent, nonprofit workforce development intermediary for the 14-24 year old age group has proved vital to sustaining cross-system dialogue and programming. Indeed, PYN's shared origins in the school-to-work components of the school district and workforce development agency have given it a cross-system orientation from the start.

With time, PYN has come to fulfill several roles. PYN leads WorkReady Philadelphia – the city's youth workforce development system – and is managing partner for the Youth Transitions Collaborative, which recently launched Project U-Turn to address the city's dropout rate. PYN staffs and supports the Youth Council and the Council's subcommittees. It has operated, and now contracts for the operation of, youth workforce centers known as E3 Power Centers in three Empowerment Zone neighborhoods. It channels federal funds for and oversees multiple youth job training programs, including a substantial summer employment effort, under the WorkReady Philadelphia banner. It builds the capacity of community-based providers through training and technical

assistance. It provides resources for and helps lead substantive discussions about policy and program design, and it developed and maintains a web site (www.osyphila.org) providing links to information about the city's efforts for out-of-school and other vulnerable youth, which also contains useful resources for other cities.

More broadly, the presence of a well-functioning intermediary such as PYN ensures a constant focus on the needs of youth and young adults, even as the Philadelphia Workforce Development Corporation concentrates its efforts on adults. PYN's presence means that accountability for youth policy and programming is situated in one place.

● **Unique and Noteworthy Aspects – Comprehensive Juvenile Reintegration Services**

Building upon its substantial cross-system efforts for older youth, Philadelphia is now testing a new model of integrated workforce, step-down, and wraparound services for young people who are returning to the city from juvenile justice facilities. This model leverages workforce and probation funding by routing re-entering youth to the existing E3 workforce training centers for a full range of services, six days per week. Local leaders will determine whether this approach, designed for the most serious re-entering juvenile offenders, reduces re-commitment and increases entrance into jobs and education for these youth.

Leadership Keys

- **Collaboration between the school district and workforce development system gives dropouts a second chance to finish high school and go on to college.** School and community-based entry points provide flexible alternative educational options and access to wraparound services that facilitate dropout recovery.
- **Intermediaries commissioned by the city serve as trusted conveners of local partners.** The Philadelphia Youth Network plays a vital role in staffing the city's Youth Council, identifying funding gaps, integrating youth data, and strengthening the capacity of community-based organizations.
- **City initiatives present youth with a clear range of options and encourage them to take responsibility for their success.** By treating youth as "members" or "partners" in its foster youth transition and youth violence reduction initiatives, the city presents youth with choices that respond to their needs and entrusts them to make good decisions.



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CASE STUDIES
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San Francisco, California

(pop. 739,426)

Traditional City Concerns Spur Initiatives for Transitioning Foster Youth

San Francisco is home to a significant set of cross-system initiatives for youth in transition, particularly for young people aging out of foster care. The latest initiatives build upon other recent cross-system efforts for young people who need additional supports to stay in or return to school, or who have found their way into the criminal justice system. All are taking shape under an umbrella of unified policymaking for children and youth that bespeaks a new level of mayoral attention and leadership, with staff support from several city departments.

In some ways, San Francisco's children and youth demographics are unconventional, with only 15 percent of the general population under 18 years old compared with a 30 percent national average. Among that relatively small percentage, statistics give reason for concern. One of every seven African-American children lives in foster care. One

third of 15-17 year old African-American youth have passed through the Youth Guidance Center juvenile justice detention facility. Since 2000, the city has seen climbing indices of social deprivation, due to the mounting isolation of poor, minority communities and an economic downturn.

The joint city-county Human Services Agency (HSA) recently determined that approximately 850 young people per year will "emancipate," or age out of foster care, from 2004-09. This represents a significant uptick. Two thirds of those young people are African-American, and 15 percent are Latino. City employees and other experts have built a case for stronger cross-system efforts to improve the situation of emancipated youth because so many experience homelessness within a few years of leaving foster care – 45 percent in one recent study – as well as unemployment (53 percent), incomplete

secondary education (30 percent), living below the poverty threshold (59 percent), and reliance on public assistance (33 percent). Also, one fifth of foster youth who were age 16 were already on probation, and two thirds of youth victims of homicide had spent time in foster care.

How Cross-System Collaboration Works in San Francisco

San Francisco is using cross-system collaboration to make it easier for young people aging out of foster care to complete or continue their education, find housing and jobs, attain medical insurance, and accumulate assets. Notably, city efforts to prepare for the “aging out” moment at or near age 18 begin as early as age 14.

For instance, San Francisco is increasing the supply of permanent, affordable supportive housing, as well as transitional housing for emancipated foster youth ages 18-24. Young people can live initially in one of 31 individual units of scattered-site transitional housing, with support from the state Department of Social Services and cooperation from two nonprofit organizations.

While in transitional housing, young people have access to wraparound services, including economic literacy classes, vocational and employment training, on-the-job support and retention services, mental health services, mentoring, tutoring, life skills, and GED classes.

Key partners for affordable supportive housing include local foundations, the Corporation for Supportive Housing, and community-based organizations. The city sets aside space for youth in existing and new supportive housing developments, and provides a rent subsidy. Foster youth in transition also benefit from direct foundation investments in housing, from advocacy at the state level to ensure that older youth in transition remain eligible for housing assistance, and from philanthropic readiness to offer an

attractive match for federal homelessness funding. Respecting the importance of newfound family connections, the city and its partners are also exploring ways to provide a housing stipend to allow foster youth to stay in their kinship placement, if it is working for them and the family, until they are ready to leave, along with support services.

The city is using grants from several foundations to provide employment-related assistance at the one-stop, citywide Independent Living Skills Center to ensure that transitioning foster youth have access to jobs and solid career information. Simultaneously, the city is working with the San Francisco Private Industry Council and others to ensure that young people who find their way into a One Stop Career Link Center will be offered a stronger “youth track” of services and referrals. For 90 youth, savings from wages are matched and provide a pool of assets in an Individual Development Account (IDA). Youth may use IDAs for education, job training, and for housing security deposits. Case managers endeavor to sign up all transitioning youth for Extended Medi-Cal.

● Leadership

Mayor Gavin Newsom’s emphasis on livability – through reducing homelessness, among other steps – has led directly to the new cross-system efforts described above. Early in his administration, the mayor and others saw that the weak link of foster care transition was a prime cause of homelessness among the young. In order to launch and sustain these cross-system efforts, Mayor Newsom has taken two rather different leadership steps regarding youth.

One step was establishing the Mayor’s Children, Youth, Arts, and Education Cluster Group as the lead policy planning entity for children and youth services. Frequent meetings chaired by a member of the mayor’s staff bring together representatives of agencies focused on parks and recreation, the arts, the status of



Early in his administration, Mayor Gavin Newsom

saw that the weak link of foster care transition was
a prime cause of homelessness among youth.

women, criminal justice, health, housing, and libraries, as well as senior officials of the Department of Children, Youth and Their Families (DCYF) and the Human Services Agency. In contrast with the Mayor's Children's Cabinet made up of department heads, cluster group members are senior line employees of departments and agencies.

The mayor has charged the Cluster Group with keeping the administration on track with regard to its policy pledges. For instance, the Group regularly reviews pledges made in the mayor's "State of the City" speech, with particular attention to those in which children- and youth-related departments and offices would want to play a role. The Cluster Group also serves as an "action tank" for discussing trends, setting priorities, and determining next steps on joint projects such as improving data sharing between and among departments.

Through the Cluster Group, several inter-departmental partnerships have evolved. The Youth Workforce Committee worked to map the city's overall investment in youth employment services and found that too few youth were moving on to opportunities in the private sector. A report and set of recommendations was brought to the mayor, leading to the creation of Jobs For Youth, a public-private partnership that was created to help provide an easy-access system for local employers to hire youth that complete publicly funded training

programs. In response to the mayor's concern over the lack of employment opportunities for youth involved with the juvenile justice system, the city created "New Directions," a pilot initiative designed to provide job readiness training, intensive case management, and work experience opportunities for 350 young people on probation.

In a second leadership step using his fiscal powers, the mayor has directed the use of increments from the city's Rainy Day Fund to disconnected youth projects, and has done so in a way that links the city more closely with its schools. Namely, within the first year of the new administration, the city dedicated \$400,000 from this source for anti-truancy efforts, as well as \$225,000 for pilot "school reentry" programs for long-term truants at two high schools and one middle school. DCYF also funds an anti-truancy coordinator position who functions as a school district employee.

The mayor's direction of resources to fight truancy represents the latest chapter in a story developing since the 2002 issuance of the first of two local reports describing truancy as a major risk factor for gang involvement. In addition to making the truancy grants, the mayor has championed the agenda of a broad, multi-agency and multi-system Stay in School Coalition. This Coalition has stressed better attendance policies and procedures, greater outreach to truant youth, adoption of prevention strategies, and full utilization of community-based resources.

● **Lead Agency/Intermediary**

Structurally, San Francisco provides an example of a city achieving cross-system collaboration through the combined efforts of a lead agency, along with other agency partners and intermediary bodies. The joint city-county Human Services Agency (HSA, formerly Department of Human Services) serves as lead agency to anchor the city's youth-in-transition initiative. The policy-oriented Cluster Group fulfills some of the convening and visioning roles of an intermediary. The city's Department of Children, Youth and Their Families (DCYF) has joined HSA in ramping up citywide attention to disconnected youth, and provides staff for a new Transitional Youth Task Force.

● **Unique and Noteworthy Aspects**

DCYF has received financial support since 1991 in the form of a share of property taxes, dedicated through the referendum process. The department, which uses its funds to support a wide variety of community-based activities for youth up

to age 18, also provided a boost to disconnected youth and cross-system discussions through its latest annually-published Community Needs Assessment. For example, the assessment pointed to the cross-system consequences seen through recent mapping work, which identified seven street corners where the need for social services is highly concentrated. Mapping determined that “only 126 youth account for more than half of the days at the Juvenile Hall. Eighty percent of these youth are also behavioral health services clients of the Department of Public Health (DPH), and 40 percent are in foster care.” The assessment went on to recommend that the Juvenile Probation Department integrate delivery of services to youth in the juvenile justice system through better coordination with other city departments such as DPH and HSA, and told the success story of a 30-year long effort to reduce teen parenting in the city – in which “teen parenting rates and repeat births...have declined 45 percent and 42 percent respectively since 1990” and are “now among the lowest in the state.”

Leadership Keys

- **Worries about youth homelessness and violence within San Francisco fueled discussions about the challenges facing young people who are leaving foster care.** A broad range of partners work together to ensure that transitioning foster youth have access to supportive housing and employment assistance.
- **The mayor encourages collaboration at different levels through leadership by key city agencies.** With the joint city-county Human Services Agency as the lead intermediary, and the Mayor's Children, Youth, Arts, and Education Cluster Group providing policy and planning support, the city fosters relationships among key staff that lead to better outcomes for youth in transition and other disconnected young people.



CASE STUDIES

San José, California

(pop. 912,332)

The Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force Orchestrates Cross-System Interventions

San José, the nation's tenth largest city, stands out for putting in place and sustaining a robust structure through which agencies and systems work together on behalf of disconnected youth – namely, the Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force and its Bringing Everyone's Strengths Together (BEST) funding collaborative. In addition, the ability of public agencies such as the Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services Department and the Police Department to coordinate through the Task Force has created a strong ripple effect. For the large group of community-based service providers and community organizing groups that the city counts as partners, and who work with young people daily, the ripple effect involves a funding pool, clear targets adjusted yearly, and an orientation toward results. Complementing these structures is prominent leadership by three mayors and four city managers to date.

A 300 percent rise in the violent juvenile crime rate in the late 1980s and early 1990s originally led top city officials, as well as community leaders, to look for new approaches to making neighborhoods and schools safer and to raising young people in a positive atmosphere. The rising crime rates were particularly jarring in San José, which strives to be the “safest large city in the nation.” After a years-long drop in the juvenile crime rate during the mid- to late-1990s, more recent years have seen a rise in gang-related aggravated assaults and other crimes. Other factors in recent years have included a serious economic slump and consequent high unemployment in the “capital of Silicon Valley,” a steadily large flow of current and former gang members returning from incarceration, and rising concern over dropout rates and the lack of educational alternatives for struggling students and dropouts. These conditions



The San José Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force

and its Bringing Everyone's Strengths Together (BEST) funding mechanism place an emphasis on prevention and intervention, with suppression as a last resort.

have prompted renewed attention to disconnected youth.

How Cross-System Collaboration Works in San José

● Leadership

The commitment of Mayor Chuck Reed to carry on the vision of past city leaders, and of the Gang Prevention Task Force that he convenes monthly, is that “all youth and their families will feel safe and productive in San José.” With a trim police force, widely varying socioeconomic conditions in different parts of the city, 19 school districts, and a county government that fulfills many social services functions, this continued commitment has helped knit together potentially disparate forces over a period of more than 15 years.

In addition to setting out and articulating a vision, and personally convening bodies such as the Task Force, mayoral leadership is present in at least four other ways:

1. **Budgeting:** Former Mayors Susan Hammer and Ron Gonzales and current Mayor Chuck Reed have used the final budget authority that the mayor of San José exercises to set aside funds each year for BEST. Reaching across systems, Mayor Reed also recently proposed hiring an additional 15 officers to the Police Department and pledged support to the

department's school liaison unit, a key facet of joint efforts among the city and school districts.

2. **Delegating:** For day-to-day effectiveness, Mayor Reed delegates most staff work on youth issues to the city Police Department and Department of Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services (PRNS), while making aides available for liaison with these and other line departments.
3. **Listening:** By inviting all groups to meetings of the Task Force, the city's mayors have created a venue to listen to citizen views and concerns and to offer appropriate follow-up steps by city agencies.
4. **Providing Visibility:** San José's mayor is the key public visibility face of the “safe city” effort through ongoing public appearances and pronouncements.

● Lead Agency/Intermediary

The Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force is the intermediary body that provides a basic structure for cross-system efforts for San José's disconnected youth. The Task Force has now been in place for 16 years. Staff support from two lead city agencies – Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services (PRNS) and the Police Department – helps the Task Force play this critical infrastructure role.

Formed in 1991 “to focus governmental action on gang prevention,” the Task Force

has grown to include representatives of city and county parks, courts, and law enforcement agencies and school districts. Other groups that participate include faith-based organizations such as People Acting in Community Together (PACT), gang intervention experts California Youth Outreach, and the state parole office and U.S. Attorney. Also, the Task Force has developed a number of strategic objectives over the years that expand its focus beyond gang prevention alone. These include creating and fostering collaborative partnerships that contribute to the academic and developmental success of children and youth, preparing young people for the workforce, and supporting the livability of neighborhoods. The Task Force's target population is youth ages 12-21 exhibiting high-risk behaviors, including those related to gang lifestyles, violence, and gang participation, as well as families and friends of youth involved with the gang lifestyle or incarcerated for gang-related crimes.

To ensure support and coordination at the highest levels of government and throughout the community, as well as effectiveness in operations, the Task Force operates through two components – a Policy Team and a Technical Team. The Policy Team consists of government department heads and senior officials, school district leaders, and representatives of key community-based organizations, businesses, and neighborhoods. This team provides direction for the city's anti-gang policy, and develops and monitors Memoranda of Understanding with all organizations and agencies engaged in gang prevention and intervention efforts. The mayor chairs Policy Team meetings, which are open to the public and include time on the agenda for input from citizens and partner organizations. The mayor's office and PRNS provide staff support for this team.

The Technical Team is where ground-level cross-system work gets done, and proposals get developed to take to the Policy Team. Staff members from PRNS, police officers and representatives of direct service organizations and agencies with special expertise in gangs, as well as school officials with safety responsibilities participate on this team, which typically meets every two weeks. Among other functions, the Technical Team regularly reviews and develops updates for the Policy Team regarding the gang climate and dynamics in the city. This team is also "charged with the responsibility of assuring the development of gang prevention, intervention, and suppression programs that work effectively in the neighborhoods."

One of the Task Force's key strategic tools is the Bringing Everyone's Strengths Together (BEST) funding program. The city provides BEST with general fund monies, to enable yearly grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$225,000 to 25 or more community organizations, each of which offers specific programs. Organizations that receive grants must respond to a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) and provide matching funds.

To provide a sense of scale, BEST granted approximately \$30 million in city funds by 2006. BEST has continued to grow, with a 2005-06 operating budget of \$3 million for which contracted agencies provided a 20 percent match. Funding at this level allowed BEST grantees to hire 110 full-time staff people, who provide services to 4,204 "unduplicated customers," and a total of more than 316,000 hours of service to parents and youth each year. Even considered alongside tobacco settlement, workforce development, and community development funds, BEST represents one of the larger children and youth funding sources at the city's disposal.

BEST's original emphasis on a mix of prevention, intervention, and suppression strategies and tactics – a mix re-calibrated each year – now also includes programs targeting the improvement of life skills, school and community safety, and educational achievement. Also, the city and Task Force have maintained the perspective that BEST grants are not solely for use in supporting short-term program operations, but also represent investments in capacity-building. One step in this direction has been a move to three year grants, rather than one year grants. In addition, the city provides BEST grantees with opportunities to send staff to cross-learning events, performance measurement workshops, and intervention training sessions.

Triennial strategic plans of the Task Force describe the “services and resources [that] have been developed, deployed, and expanded to address gang-related and risk behavior issues in San José.” The planning process leading into the creation of each year's work plan is itself a model of collaboration and consultation. The process includes an annual retreat of the Policy and Technical Teams, community input solicited through a BEST needs assessment, and a close review of the results of annual BEST evaluations. For instance, at its recent annual retreat, the Technical Team noted disturbing trends, such as increasing incidents of higher-intensity violence among gang-involved youth, acts of violence among youth ages 15-19, increasing use of technology as a means for communications between gang members, active recruitment and an increasing number of self-identified gang-involved youth, and declining resources available from city and other sources. Also, a new survey showed very poor developmental assets among youth in Juvenile Hall, in comparison to all youth across the county.

With these conditions in mind, the Task Force developed a new “Reclaiming Our Youth” strategic work plan. This plan proclaims adoption of a new intervention-based strategy with key elements that include an emphasis on further capacity-building, further incorporation of the Search Institute's developmental assets model of youth development as well as resiliency research into the work of city-funded service providers, and establishment of a new organizational and communications structure. On the numbers, the plan called for ramping up intervention-based services, beginning with 70 percent of BEST funding (up from 39 percent in 2002-03, and 54 percent in 2003-04) with the goal of reaching and diverting more actual gang members. During 2006, approximately half of the individuals served by BEST were gang members or gang-supporters, and the other half were deemed high-risk or at-risk clients.

● Unique and Noteworthy Aspects

San José's emphasis on prevention and intervention, with suppression as a last resort, has been important to its success with cross-system efforts. This has meant that an agency such as the Police Department, once primarily identified with the use of suppression tactics, now also gets heavily involved in prevention and intervention. Community-based agencies continue to provide intervention services while working closely and cooperatively with suppression efforts. The emphasis on prevention and intervention has also produced creative new approaches and the use of a broader range of tactics and responses, including BEST-funded activities, code enforcement, legal injunctions (e.g., to prevent individuals from being in a certain neighborhood), and a continuum of services to address truancy.

How Collaboration Makes a Difference for San José's Most Vulnerable Youth

A recent third-party evaluation of accomplishments made through BEST funding confirms some of the ways in which cross-system efforts make a difference for disconnected youth in San José. Overall,

Juvenile Hall admissions decreased by 59 percent between 1994 and 2004. In addition, BEST program staff indicate that their customers have developed caring relationships with more adults due to their BEST services, and that children and youth customers, as well as their parents, give BEST services high marks in customer satisfaction ratings.

Leadership Keys

- **The Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force transcends mayoral terms and city managers' tenures.** Since the early 1990s, three mayors and four city managers have supported the Task Force by providing funding, reaching out to schools and the community, and heightening the visibility of public safety efforts that involve the Task Force.
- **The Task Force coordinates policymaking and implementation efforts through two separate teams.** Policy and technical teams lead an intensive strategic planning process and take responsibility for different aspects of the Task Force's work, with support from the mayor's office and two key intermediaries – the city's Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services Department and the Police Department.
- **The city carefully recalibrates funding based on changing needs for prevention, intervention, and suppression.** The BEST funding mechanism allows the city to assess needs, set priorities, evaluate programs, and redirect funding in response to changing circumstances over time.

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Additional Resources

National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (YEF Institute), a special entity within NLC, helps municipal leaders take action on behalf of the children, youth, and families in their communities. The Institute serves as a national resource, providing guidance and assistance to municipal officials, compiling and disseminating information on promising strategies and best practices, building networks of local officials working on similar issues and concerns, and conducting research on the key challenges facing municipalities. The Institute offers local elected officials, city staff, and those who work with these officials the opportunity to join the Municipal Network on Disconnected Youth by visiting www.nlc.org/iyef or contacting the Institute at (202) 626-3014 or iyef@nlc.org.

Alternative High School Initiative (AHSI) is a network of youth development organizations committed to creating educational opportunities for young people for whom traditional school settings have not been successful. NLC works closely with the Big Picture Company to develop the content of AHSI convenings and to guide the evolution of the network. Contact (508) 369-6104 or ahsi@bigpicture.com. Web site: www.ahsi.info.

American Youth Policy Forum (AYPF), a nonprofit, nonpartisan professional development organization based in Washington, D.C., provides learning opportunities for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers

working on youth and education issues at the national, state, and local levels. This work includes a focus on at-risk, dropout and disconnected youth, and alternative education. AYPF's goal is to enable participants to become more effective in the development, enactment, and implementation of sound policies affecting the nation's young people by providing information, insights, and networks to better understand the development of healthy and successful young people, productive workers, and participating citizens in a democratic society. Contact (202) 775-9731 or aypf@aypf.org. Web site: www.aypf.org.

Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) is a national nonprofit that works to improve the economic security, educational and workforce prospects, and family stability of low-income parents, children, and youth. CLASP conducts research, provides policy analysis, advocates at the federal and state level, and offers information and technical assistance on a range of issues for federal, state, and local policymakers, advocates, researchers, and the media. CLASP works to advance a cross-system, cross-funding stream approach to building the community infrastructure that connects disconnected youth to alternative education, training, career exposure, and labor market opportunities in order to prepare them for adult success. Contact (202) 906-8000. Web site: www.clasp.org.

Jobs for the Future (JFF) is a nonprofit research, consulting, and advocacy organiza-

tion that works to create educational and economic opportunity for those who need it most. JFF engages in research and analysis, local projects, and advocacy around issues of education and workforce development. Through one of its current projects, JFF offers policy recommendations and research on ways to provide disconnected young people with the learning and credentials they need to make the transition to productive adulthood. Contact (617) 728-4446 or info@jff.org. Web site: www.jff.org.

Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative is a national effort to help youth in foster care make successful transitions to adulthood. Working through local communities, the Initiative helps youth make the connections they need to education, employment, health care, housing, and supportive personal and community relationships. Web site: www.jimcaseyouth.org.

Juvenile Law Center (JLC) seeks to ensure that the child welfare, juvenile justice, and other public systems provide vulnerable children with the protection and services they need to become happy, healthy, and productive adults. Founded in 1975 as a nonprofit legal service, JLC is one of the oldest public interest law firms for children in the nation. JLC works on behalf of children who have come within the purview of public agencies, including abused or neglected children placed in foster homes, delinquent youth sent to residential treatment facilities or adult prisons, or children in placement with specialized services needs. Contact (215) 625-0551. Web site: www.jlc.org.

National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, founded in 1996, is a nonprofit, nonpartisan initiative to improve the well-being of children, youth, and families by reducing teen pregnancy. The goal of the Campaign is to reduce the rate of teen pregnancy by one-third between 2006 and 2015.

The Campaign has recently expanded its focus to include young adults as well. Contact (202) 478-8500 or campaign@teenpregnancy.org. Web site: www.teenpregnancy.org.

National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) promotes effective, humane, fair, and economically sound solutions to family, community, and justice problems. Through research, reform initiatives, and work with individuals, public and private organizations, and the media, NCCD works to prevent and reduce crime and delinquency. Contact (510) 208-0500. NCCD also joined NLC's Institute for Youth, Education, and Families in 2006 to launch a 13-city California Cities Gang Prevention Network. Web site: www.nccd-crc.org.

National Youth Employment Coalition (NYEC) offers research, best practices, and legislative information regarding youth workforce development, education reform, juvenile justice, and youth development. In addition, NYEC provides self-assessment tools and recognition programs for youth employment and alternative education programs. Contact: (202) 659-1064. Web site: www.nyec.org.

The Prevention Institute, in partnership with public health/injury prevention researchers from Harvard and UCLA, hosts the Urban Networks to Increase Thriving Youth Through Violence Prevention (UNITY) project. UNITY aims to engage youth and representatives of the 45 largest cities, along with national violence prevention advocates and leaders, in a national consortium to shape the U.S. strategy for urban youth violence prevention. The project provides tools, training, and technical assistance to help cities be more effective in preventing youth violence. Contact (510) 444-7738 x324. Web site: www.preventioninstitute.org/UNITY.html.



**Institute for
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